

Hello. Hays CISD thanks for joining us on our first episode of HaysBeat!, the HR podcast. We're so excited to be able to connect with you through a new mode of communication for us. I'm Mary Torres, HR project management coordinator, and I'm your host. We had so many ideas on what we should discuss for our first topic, benefits, insurance, teacher incentive allotment, well-being, and we landed on compensation. We know that everyone has questions about how they are compensated changes being made and how it affects them. We also thought this topic is timely because we have a really important document going out on Friday, October 14th and we wanted to be able to discuss it before it sent out. That document is your salary notification. Today we are joined by Dr. Medina, the Chief Human Resources Officer, and Cassie Cantu, the compensation administrator. Dr. Medina and Cassie, welcome, Doctor Medina, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do in your role? Sure. Mary, thank you and thank you for having us today. So, gosh, where should I start? Something fun, light, personal here, something that people often don't know is my love for animals. I have a couple of horses, Captain and Caspian, and got a couple of dogs named after some artists. That I'm particularly a fan of, and that's Diego and Frida. And I've got lots and lots of chickens that provide us lots and lots of eggs. Well, we love that here because you bring US farm fresh eggs every day. Well, not every day. And Gee, something on a professional level, I am the Chief Human resource officer for the district and I'm into my second year here. And so I while I'm not absolutely a newbie, I feel like every day I'm still learning lots about the

Hays way. And so that's always really enlightening to me. And I really enjoy getting out there and learning about Hays and learning about people. And that's probably the best part of my day is when I get a chance to meet people and learn about Hays. Well, we're so glad you're here in the district because I know I see your enthusiasm every day for making things great here at Hays CISD. Cassie, introduce yourself, tell us a little bit. Yeah. So I'm also fairly new to the district. I started working for Hays at the very end of last school year, just in time for the new hiring season. And so far I've learned so much about Hays. CISD and I've I've really enjoyed working with the staff and my team. Everyone has been so great. And I live in the Kyle area and I have a 9 year old son who is also new to Hays and he absolutely loves his new school. He loves his new teachers and all his new friends. And when I'm not at work, I enjoy watching him play sports and spending time with friends and family. That's great. That sounds wonderful. And we are so lucky to have you. Thank you. I'm happy to be here. Mary, tell us about yourself. Wait, I forgot to introduce myself. Well, I'm very new to the district as well. I'm Mary Torres. I have 20 years in education and various roles like classroom teacher. I spent time in technology as well as DEI work. That was all of those things have really helped form who I am as an educator. And so I'm really happy to be here in HR as a project. Mary DEI, diversity and equity, diversity, equity and inclusion. Yes, I was the director in a school in Dallas. So that's just really helped form who I am and shape, you know, what I think and how I can help students in any district that I work in. So I'm happy to be here outside

of work I have. I'm also an animal lover. We have a dog and three cats that I love, but please do not refer to me as a cat lady. That's all I ask everyone in the district. OK. So that's a little bit about myself. And I know as we go through these episodes, we'll just get to know everybody in the HR department. So why are we here today? I have a question. Let's talk about it. The board

voted on a cost of living adjustment for the 22-23 school year. Dr. Medina, can you explain what cost of living adjustment means? You know, how was that created and why? Sure. So cost of living. The ultimate goal for cost of living is to ensure that we consider things such as inflation in our city and definitely our county and our immediate area. And to see your to what extent are we able to keep up with that inflation. The interesting thing about education is we are a public entity. We serve the public. We are not a profit entity, much like many private organizations that can generate high levels of profit and can more easily sometimes provide higher increases to keep up with the inflation. So we know that we always have those challenges. What we also know and that we're really blessed to have here in our school district is that we're a fast growing district. being a fast growth district obviously means that we have more students and at the state level we're funded based on the number of students that we have enrolled, but moreover ensuring that. They are attending school. So if you are a parent in Hays ISD or in an educator in Hays CISD I think it's important to ensure

and to encourage our students to attend school because enrollment and attendance means more dollars and that means more revenue. And if our board has more revenue than they're more likely to consider an aggressive cost of living adjustment to offset the inflation. But how are you able to determine what that number would be to adjust for the cost of living here in our community? Well, there's various indices, right? Certainly our county will keep indices. I know at the national level you can search. Online to see different inflation or cost of living indices. And so looking at those cost of living indices, you're able to see that inflation is occurring here not only in Kyle, but really in the Central TX area. And so looking at that and while we may not always hit that inflation rate, we know that we need to make some adjustments because our employees need it, right, right, absolutely. So with all of these changes happening in our community that we talked about the growth, the growth. Of the city, the growth of the school district, what are some of the things that you have put in place or the school district has put in place to ensure that our employee's compensation is always being reviewed and that it's accurate, right. So Mary, first of all my role is to conduct analysis and to work with our Superintendent, his cabinet to make recommendations ultimately to the board right. And the board will consider those and typically does and then determines its budget priorities and ultimately passes a budget every June. And so one of the things as a human resources department, what we are committed to doing and should be committed to is reviewing our pay systems, meaning what are the practices for determining compensation, but also looking at market and

seeing whether different position types are keeping up with the market. For example, this year or really in the last couple of years, we'd really have, we've had to look closely at transportation drivers, right. We know that throughout our entire area, districts have struggled with finding drivers, bus drivers. And so we have had to take a close look not only at what other school districts you're paying, but also looking at what our immediate competitors are doing. And that's been very atypical for school districts. It's really not always the best practice or the practice to do is to look out of industry kind of positions. Post COVID though, however, we have had to do things very extraordinary, right and atypical. And so we've had to compare ourselves to what does Metro pay its drivers, what does Amazon pay its drivers? And that's just an example. But

the point being that we have to look at the market and ensure that our teachers, our transportation drivers, that our child nutrition people are, that their salaries, that they're compensation is keeping up with market. As well as looking at a market analysis of even benefits, right, right. And so reviewing all of our compensation packages. Right. So, yeah. Well, it's really interesting to me when you mention all of these outside businesses as being our competitors. Like I was mentioning that I moved to Dallas and came back after 11 years. And there's just so many opportunities for people out there. And so knowing that we're competing with outside industries and that our district is not only comparing our compensation with other districts, but also outside businesses like Target or Amazon. Because in reality, we really are competing with other businesses

that offer compensation. So it's good to know that we as a school district are looking into everything, all the opportunities in the community, not just other school districts nearby. Yeah. And another one that really comes to mind is even technology, right, technology and the whole Austin area has just really changed. And so the market for technology positions, for example, has caused us to look at compensation even outside of education. And there's always new positions being created within that industry. And that's one thing that we need to look at in terms of how other departments are structured in other organizations, but also the compensation for those technology positions as well. So that's just another example. Well, we have talked a lot about salary and the way that we are compensated and what goes behind it. But what are other ways that our employees are being compensated? Great question. And this is something that is oftentimes overlooked, right? I think it's important and one thing that I would like our employees to know is that. Is that it's important to look at the whole compensation package. How does our district, you know, what has our board supported in terms of recognizing and compensating our employees outside of just the base salary, our district has very competitive stipends. For example, this past year the board approved a stipend for bilingual teachers, certified teachers serving our bilingual students of 7100. And that was after a market analysis and it's the highest that I know of. And that because of that we were able to experience at one point just 0 vacancies and bilingual positions and that's always fluctuating, but to know that the

strategy of increasing stipends in that area was exactly what needed to have happened and that the board recognized and approved. That was exactly what should happen. And so again, I always say, if you see a board member, thank a board member because they've done so much for us in the last, for years, particularly as the time that I've been here, they've been very supportive of the recommendations. So stipends is just another example. We also have different incentives, recruiting incentives, retention incentives, incentives for positions in schools that sometimes are harder to staff, where we see higher levels of turnover and we definitely want to attract and retain people to those schools. One thing that I do want to highlight is our district has a \$0.00 option for healthcare for medical care where many districts and I was one where I remember paying 2 to \$300.00 month right for my healthcare and here to know that I have a zero option. That is amazing and that our board has valued that. Again, see a board member, thank a board member. You know, we offer a \$0.00 employee assistance program. I was reviewing the data just the other day to see how many of our employees really access our, it's kind of a program for crisis, right? Whether someone's dealing with something at work or

dealing with something at home, sometimes it's financial. So getting financial counseling, our employees really make use of that. And that's a \$0.00 counseling option that our employees have. The board just approved this past June a life insurance policy for our employees. The fact that they recognize that as important is, again, see a board member, thank a board member. All of us now have a \$1000 life insurance policy to support our families in the in the event that we were to pass away. We also have other

very affordable supplemental options for our insurance such as disability insurance or vision, also dental. And so to know that we've got those affordable options, I think is very beneficial to our employees. And again, this goes back to looking and researching besides my base salary, how is the district supporting me. Gosh, I don't want to forget anything because this is so important. I one thing I also want to say is that the fact that our board supports us and it's a financial commitment to support education not only for our students. For our employees as well. So for example, this year we have our full candidacy cohort of National Board Certified Teachers that are looking and seeking National Board certification. And so we have Mary, I know that you're supporting that. And my projects that I know I do. So the fact that they're financially supporting that and supporting those teachers to continue to grow in their profession and these are people that are doing something above and beyond what they're being called to do in the classroom is just amazing. So that's a shout out to them. But we also have all of these higher education programs to get associates degrees, bachelors degrees and also in some identified areas of Masters degree. That's a financial commitment that I'm very, very, very grateful. And lastly, I think I would want to say that the Board has supported us in being a district that is participating in the statewide teacher incentive allotment, which means that our teachers here in our district have the potential to earn significant dollars in addition to what the board has provided. Mary, that's another project that you're helping us with and the fact that the board supported us in having you here to ensure that we have an effective teacher incentive allotment program speaks volumes about how

the board's values our employees through compensation and investing in them.

Dr. Medina, I love that you explained all of that. I know as a new hire, one of my reasons for coming here or something that was very attractive was the no cost health insurance. And I know Cassie, you probably have too worked in other places, school districts, other private organizations where you did have to pay 2 or \$300.00 for your insurance. So that was something that I really look for is the benefits and most people do. But to hear you talk about all of the other ways that people are compensated, all the incentives that are out there, I'm so glad you're talking about that because not everybody knows about all the great things that Hays CISD is doing to benefit our faculty and staff, students, the employees. Mary it's a district choice. I mean our board can decide how many dollars to contribute towards the Blue Cross Blue Shield plan and, our board has decided to fund it fully for the employee. And so it's a district decision. And again, see a board member, thank a board member Absolutely. I've read so many articles on retention of employees and one of the top reasons people stay in their place at their job and are happy is how they are compensated and whether they feel valued. So it's so great to hear that we value our employees by providing them with multiple benefits as part of

their compensation. So that's a lot to keep up with, Dr. Medina. And I understand that Cassie's role is new. So why did you decide to create a compensation administrator? Oh my gosh. So first of all, when you are wanting to do the work well on the behalf of our employees, when you're wanting to not only review pay

systems and practices and so forth, you want to be sure that you're communicating out on those and ensuring that you have documented processes and that our employees understand them well and that there's someone really dedicated to serving them. And so I feel like that is I felt like that was an area that we could do better and because of that we created the position. So Cassie is working on things such as the compensation manual taking and receiving calls. And beyond just supporting the pay systems review that we've done actually implementing, right, and ensuring that once we take it to the board and really that they explain it to the board in such a way that they adopt the recommendations, then it's a matter of actually carrying out and implementing all of those changes. And there were significant changes this last year that the board supported from, you know, cost of living adjustments to looking at individual, we identified particular areas that needed market adjustments and strategic types of adjustments and all of that needed someone to actually implement it. And so that's Cassie's work and she's just come in, hit the ground running. And I think the thing I hear the most about Cassie's work is not goes beyond her knowledge level but really taps into what I really wanted to see which is that people feel heard. That we're being responsive and timely, and that's what I'm hearing. So I'm really excited that Cassie is here. Well, I'm also so happy that Cassie is the person in this position because I sit right across the hall from her and it has been so great getting to know her. I've been asking Cassie questions, lots of questions about stipend, salary, and she's just really jumped into the work. I know she has such a great understanding of our processes. Dr. Medina,

you've really given us a lot of information behind the why and the how compensation is determined and configured. Cassie, you're deep into administering. So I want to go back to the cost of living adjustment that Dr. Medina discussed Cassie, can you share who is eligible for the 22-23 board approved increase? Yes. So employees who were employed during the 21-22 school year and they worked through the end of their work calendar were eligible for the 7% midpoint increase. So does that mean newly hired employees are not eligible because I'm new to the district? Yes, that is correct. Since you did not work the 21-22 school year and did not work through the end of that calendar, and you were hired for the 22-23 school year, this would mean that you would not receive the 7% midpoint increase. However, the board did adopt a compensation plan that includes about a 3 1/2% increase, which for you that means that you have a higher starting rate compared to last year's compensation plan. OK, I understand. So that means I walked into an increase with my initial salary here at Hays CISD. You mentioned an increase on the midpoint. What does that actually mean? Yeah. So all employees are paid on a pay grade or a pay scale. Every employee has the minimum, a midpoint and a maximum of their pay grade pay scale, and so the board adopted a 7% midpoint increase to all employees, as an example, the midpoint increase for teacher pay scale was \$4528.00, which is what all teachers received. I understand how the midpoint was configured for a teacher salary, but I'm not a teacher, so how would I know what my own increase would be? It

would be the same even though you're not on a pay scale and you're on a pay grade. So if you would have been employed last year and you would have worked until the end of your work calendar, then you would have received a 7% midpoint increase of your pay grade. OK, well, thanks for explaining that, Cassie. It's great to know what the district is contributing to us for all of our benefits. If I have questions about my deductions and my paycheck, who can I contact or where can I review it, because I typically get a direct deposit. So I don't see it. Yeah, so salary notification letters will go out on October 14th. I know you mentioned that earlier and you will receive an e-mail with instructions on how to access this notification. So be on the lookout for this because it will come to your Hays e-mail and the e-mail will come from "noreply@HaysCISD.net". I do know that recently our technology department sent an e-mail out that I guess people were receiving spam from and so I believe that there was a link within that e-mail that you were not supposed to click and open. However, there will be a subject line in this e-mail from noreply@hayscisid.net

that will say annual compensation notification. So be on the lookout for that e-mail and the notification letter will include your general employee information so this is a good time to review your information. And reach out to the human resources department if something doesn't look right or needs to be updated. It will also have your hourly rate, your daily rate, and your base salary rate before deductions. It'll also include stipend amounts and district contribution. So this will be the amounts that the district provides to you for your health insurance, so for your life insurance, things like that. And it is important for you to review this information and then reach out to me if you see anything wrong with your compensation, or if something just doesn't look right and you need clarification. And of course our payroll department is a good resource to reach out to you if you have questions about your deductions. OK, so sounds like October 14th is the day to be on the lookout. Dr. Medina, are there any last things that you want us to know about compensation? Ohh, geez, Mary, I think we've, I mean we've covered quite a bit and again, if there are any questions, we're here to support, Cassie's here, I'm here. We are here to support you through any questions that you might have. I think the important thing is I really would like to see us as a district have 100% of our staff members go in into the system into the employee self-service system and that's a great opportunity to just check your information, not just compensation, but all of your address, your contact information and such. It's a

great time to go ahead and take care of that. You'll also find, Mary, that you noticed and you said that you do direct deposit, right, right. The employee self-service system is actually a great place for you to go see the most current but also prior compensation. Your pay slips are maintained there and so that's a great place for you to go back and look at what those deductions have been for example. And if you have any questions, please reach out and help us. And last thing again, I've said it over and over again see a board member, thank a board member. That's great. Well, thanks for joining us in this episode of HaysBeat! The HR Podcast. We hope that you enjoyed getting to know us a little and that if you run into us at HEB, make sure to say hi. We hope that our discussion today gave you a better understanding about compensation at Hays CISD and most importantly the HR team is always willing and ready to help you, so please contact us with any questions that you might have. See you at the grocery store.