



# POLICY ANALYSIS



## State teacher salary schedules

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In the United States most teacher compensation issues are decided at the school

**STATES USE SALARY SCHEDULES AS A TOOL TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN QUALIFIED TEACHERS AND AS A WAY TO ENSURE SOME LEVEL OF EQUALIZATION OF TEACHER SALARIES ACROSS DISTRICTS.**

district level. However, a group of states have chosen to play a role in teacher pay decisions by instituting statewide teacher salary schedules.

Education Commission of the States has found that 17 states currently make use of teacher salary schedules. This education policy analysis provides information on each of the 17 states' salary schedules and addresses the following policy questions:

- **How do salary schedules work?**
- **Why do states institute salary schedules?**
- **What policy issues exist with salary schedules?**
- **What are the alternatives to salary schedules?**

**17 states currently make use of statewide teacher salary schedules to guarantee some level of minimum pay for teachers based on qualifications and years of experience.**

**State policymakers need to keep in mind that school districts can view the implementation of a statewide salary schedule as both a loss of control over local education policies and as a possible unfunded mandate.**

## HOW DO SALARY SCHEDULES WORK

There is often confusion about statewide salary schedules. The belief by some is that statewide salary schedules dictate exactly what teachers in the state will earn. The truth is that statewide salary schedules only dictate minimum salaries that school districts must provide to their teachers often based on a teacher's education and years of service.

In the 17 states that currently have a salary schedule in place districts can – and often do – pay their teachers more than the schedule mandates. This can be seen in Table I, where the average teacher pay in six of the states exceeds even the maximum salaries on the state's schedule.

## WHY DO STATES INSTITUTE SALARY SCHEDULES?

Some may ask, "If statewide salary schedules do not dictate exactly what teachers will be paid, then why do they exist?" The answer is that states make use of salary schedules primarily to ensure that every teacher in the state receives a minimum pay amount regardless of where they teach in the state. For many, this is a fairness issue – teachers need to be ensured that they will be able to make a living wage irrespective of the community that they are teaching in. However, salary schedules can also be used to achieve several other important policy goals, including:

### ■ As a tool for attracting and retaining quality teachers

School districts are in competition to hire qualified teachers with other districts in their state as well as districts in neighboring states and local public sector employers. While pay is not the only tool that districts have to recruit teachers, it is an important one. A salary schedule can be used to ensure that districts in the state are providing a respectable wage to their teachers, thus easing recruitment and retention of employees. In addition, a salary schedule can be adjusted to ensure that teacher pay in the state keeps pace both with inflation and with what neighboring states are paying their teachers.

### ■ As a way of equalizing pay between districts

A 2013 study in New York found that the average annual salary for teachers with a bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience ranged from \$35,479 to \$89,830 – a 153 percent difference – depending on which district they taught in.<sup>1</sup> In most states this type of variation in teacher pay is common. While a salary schedule alone cannot equalize teacher pay, it can help to close the gap between the highest-paid and lowest-paid teachers in the state. A schedule can help to achieve this goal by ensuring that every district in the state provides their teachers with a salary that is at least competitive with that of other districts in the state.

## WEST VIRGINIA'S SALARY EQUITY PROGRAM

West Virginia not only has a statewide salary schedule in place to help equalize teacher pay, it has an additional salary supplement program to help achieve this goal. The state's equity supplement program has been designed to ensure that teachers' salaries do not differ by more than 10 percent. The program compares the salary schedules of the 10 highest-paying districts to the lowest-paying districts in the state. The state then provides grants to the lower-paying districts that must be used for teacher salaries to help ensure that all districts have relatively competitive salaries for teachers.

## WHAT POLICY ISSUES EXIST WITH SALARY SCHEDULES?

Any policymaker looking at adopting a statewide teacher salary schedule in their state needs to be aware of several policy issues, including:

- **The perceived loss of local control:** The introduction of a statewide salary schedule can be seen by some as just another way for the state to take away local control from school districts. To avoid this perception the introduction of a salary schedule should be done with input from school districts in the state.
- **The potential to be seen as an unfunded mandate:** Increasing teacher pay through the use of a statewide salary schedule without providing additional state dollars can be seen as an unfunded mandate by school districts. State policymakers should be aware of this and should look at providing new state funding – or at least allow for a redirection of current funding – when adopting a salary schedule to avoid this argument.
- **The need to update salary schedules:** Once a statewide salary schedule has been adopted it needs to be updated on a regular basis for it to continue to be applicable. Both Illinois and Ohio have statewide salary schedules in place, but they have not been revised since 1980 and 2001, respectively. In both states the schedule has lost much, if not all, of its relevance. This can be seen in Table I where Illinois' statewide salary schedule requires districts to pay teachers a starting salary of only \$10,000 – an amount of money that no longer comes close to what teachers are paid in the state.

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO SALARY SCHEDULES?

Statewide teacher salary schedules are not the only way that states can help to influence teacher pay in districts. Some states make use of pay-for-performance programs or diversified pay for teachers in hard to staff schools or subjects, or by providing teachers with pay incentives based on prior work experience. There are other states that have chosen to achieve this goal through the use of minimum starting salaries.

Some states do not have salary schedules but require their districts to provide all of their teachers with a certain minimum amount of pay – this is true in Iowa (\$33,500)<sup>3</sup> and Maine (\$30,000).<sup>4</sup> New Mexico<sup>5</sup> requires districts to pay its starting teachers at least \$34,000, and any teachers who qualify for Level 2 and Level 3 certification are to be paid at least \$40,000 and \$50,000, respectively. California<sup>6</sup> does not have a minimum salary schedule but does require its school districts to report their starting and average teacher pay each year.

Reporting average teacher pay allows districts to determine how their pay compares with other districts and affords teachers the opportunity to shop around for future employers based on the pay they offer. This may force low-paying districts to raise their rates to remain competitive in the recruitment process.

## TABLE I: STATEWIDE TEACHER SALARY SCHEDULES FOR THE 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR

	AVERAGE SALARY 2014 (NATIONAL RANK) <sup>7</sup>	STARTING MINIMUM WITH BACHELOR'S	10 YEARS EXPERIENCE WITH BACHELOR'S	MAXIMUM SALARY	REQUIREMENTS FOR MAXIMUM SALARY
Alabama	\$48,720 (35)	\$36,867	\$42,327	\$62,040	27 years and Doctorate
Arkansas	\$47,319 (41)	\$29,244	\$36,872 (With 15 years)	\$42,140	15 years and Master's or Doctorate
Delaware	\$59,305 (13)	\$28,281	\$35,435	\$86,950	26 years and Doctorate
Georgia	\$52,924 (24)	\$31,586	\$38,847	\$72,530	21 years and Doctorate
Hawaii	\$56,291 (17)	\$34,231	\$47,909	\$61,695	6 years and Doctorate
Idaho	\$44,465 (49)	\$32,700	\$47,603	\$48,303	10 years and Master's
Illinois	\$60,124 (12)	\$10,000	\$11,600	\$13,750	13 years and Master's
Kentucky	\$50,560 (26)	\$29,803	\$37,516	\$46,211	20 years and Master's or National Board for Professional Teaching Certified
Mississippi	\$42,187 (50)	\$34,390	\$38,350	\$67,370	35 years and Doctorate
North Carolina	\$44,990 (47)	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$63,530	35 years and Doctorate
Ohio	\$55,913 (19)	\$20,000	\$27,600	\$32,460	11 years and Doctorate
Oklahoma	\$44,549 (48)	\$31,600	\$35,950	\$46,000	25 years and Doctorate
South Carolina	\$48,430 (37)	\$29,523	\$37,494	\$62,834	22 years and Doctorate
Tennessee	\$47,742 (40)	\$31,500	\$34,690	\$38,530	11 years and advanced degree



<b>Texas</b>	\$49,690 (30)	\$28,080	\$38,080	\$45,510	20 years
<b>Washington</b>	\$52,969 (23)	\$35,069	\$39,950	\$66,099	16 years and Doctorate or Master's plus 90 credit hours
<b>West Virginia</b>	\$45,086 (46)	\$32,675	\$38,796	\$59,897	35 years and Doctorate

*Click on the state names for full salary schedule.*

## NOTES ON TEACHER SALARY SCHEDULES

**Hawaii:** The state of Hawaii operates as a single school district. The amounts in the chart above represent the state’s minimum salary schedule that is contained within legislation. However, teacher salaries in Hawaii are dictated by the statewide **Collective Bargaining Agreement** (CBA). See Exhibits B and BB of the CBA for actual teacher pay in the state.

**West Virginia:** The teacher salary numbers in the above chart include both the state’s minimum salary and the state’s equity supplement amount; not all districts are entitled to receive the supplement amount. For a description of the state’s salary equity supplement see section above.



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## ENDNOTES

1. Alex Colvin, et al, New York State teacher salary report. (Cornell University, ILR School, Scheinman Institute on Conflict Resolution, 2013) 1, <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/sites/ilr.cornell.edu/files/New%20York%20State%20Teacher%20Salary%20Report%20December%202013.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2016).
2. W. Va. Code Ann. § 18A-4-5.
3. Iowa Code Ann. § 284.15.
4. Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 20-A, § 13406.
5. N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-10A-7.
6. Selected Certified Salaries and Related Statistics 2014-15. California Department of Education, School Fiscal Services Division. Accessed on the web: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/fd/cs/documents/j90summary1415.pdf>
7. National Education Association, Rankings & Estimates – Ranking of States 2014 and Estimates of School Statistics 2015 (Washington D.C.: National Education Association, 2015), 19, [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA\\_Rankings\\_And\\_Estimates-2015-03-11a.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA_Rankings_And_Estimates-2015-03-11a.pdf) (accessed February 22, 2016).

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