



# TSTA NEWS

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## **New study: Despite increases in school funding, Texas still trails many states in teacher pay, per-student spending**

The new school finance legislation enacted last year improved Texas' national rankings in education spending, but Texas still trails many states and the District of Columbia in average teacher pay and the amount of spending per student, according to a new report on state-by-state education spending compiled by the National Education Association (NEA).

Average teacher pay in Texas increased from \$54,121 in 2018-19 to \$57,091 during the recently completed 2019-20 school year, a gain of 5.5 percent. That moved Texas up two notches, from 28<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, among the states and the District of Columbia, but teacher pay in Texas still trails the national average of \$63,645 by more than \$6,500.

"We are happy that the Legislature increased funding for public education and set aside money for pay raises last year, but obviously we still have a long way to go to provide all school children and educators the resources they need to keep our state moving forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," Texas State Teachers Association President Noel Candelaria said.

The Legislature ordered school districts to give teachers raises and set guidelines, including preference for more-experienced teachers. But lawmakers didn't set the size of the raises, and pay increases varied among districts.

NEA's calculations, based on data collected from the Texas Education Agency, found that average teacher pay in Texas has increased 17.4 percent in current dollars since 2010-11, the last school year before the Legislature slashed \$5.4 billion from the public education budget to help stem a revenue shortfall in 2011. In adjusted constant dollars, though, Texas teachers have seen an average pay increase of only 1.1 percent over that period, NEA said.

The NEA report, updated annually, said that spending per public school student in average daily attendance (ADA) in Texas increased by an estimated \$830 for the 2019-20 school year, an increase of almost 8 percent over 2018-19.

The new spending estimate of \$11,415 per student moves Texas to 37<sup>th</sup> among the states and the District of Columbia in that key measure of education support, up from 42<sup>nd</sup> a year ago. Texas still trails the national average of \$14,254 by an estimated \$2,839 per child, but by a smaller gap than in 2018-19.

Candelaria noted that the Legislature, even as it was boosting education funding, unnecessarily restricted the ability of school districts to meet future needs by putting a 2.5 percent cap on annual increases in property tax revenue, the districts' only source of local funding. That cap will make budget-setting even more difficult for school boards as Texas works to recover from economic losses from the coronavirus pandemic.

"We know legislators will face budgetary challenges stemming from the pandemic, but we urge them to remember Texas needs a strong education system to lead the way to long-term economic recovery," Candelaria added.

The Texas State Teachers Association is an affiliate of the National Education Association.