



TSTA NEWS

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New report: Teacher pay in Texas trails national average by \$7,700; average ADA near bottom nationally

As the governor and legislative majority give a higher priority to temporary tax relief than the critical needs of under-funded public schools, Texas' per-pupil spending has dropped to 44th, near the bottom, nationally, and teacher salaries trail the national average by more than \$7,700 for the current, 2022-23 school year.

According to the National Education Association's (NEA) latest ranking of the states and the District of Columbia, the average teacher salary in Texas is now \$60,716, an increase of about 3 percent over the average salary of \$58,887 for the 2021-22 school year. But based on data NEA obtained from state education and budget departments, Texas lags the national average, estimated at \$68,469, by \$7,753.

Moreover, NEA reported, the Texas teacher average represented a 4.72 percent reduction in pay since 2014, after inflation is considered.

NEA estimated Texas' per-student expenditure per average daily attendance (ADA) for the current school year at \$12,503, a drop of more than 5 percent from last year. That puts Texas \$4,629 below the national average of \$17,132 and increases Texas' deficit in that key funding category by more than \$1,300 since last year alone. While Texas' average ADA expenditure was falling, the national average was increasing by more than 4 percent.

"The record, \$33 billion budget surplus gave lawmakers a rare opportunity to address the teacher shortage and give our public schools the kind of forward-looking investment each of our 5 million-plus students need for a chance at a successful future. Our leaders are failing both priorities," Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina said.

"Instead, Gov. Greg Abbott and the legislative majority are wasting half of the surplus on a political con game. Most of the so-called property tax relief will be gone in a few years as property values continue to rise. This will happen until state leaders significantly increase the state's share of school funding and stop placing the largest burden on local property taxpayers. Our public schools and educators need more state funding than what the House and the Senate are offering, and they need it now," she added.

As of 2021-22, local property taxpayers in Texas paid 56.7 percent of the total state and local revenue spent on public education. That ranked Texas 14th highest among the states and the District of Columbia. The national average for local revenue expenditures on K-12 education was 48.9 percent.

Taking a deeper dive into teacher data from 12,000 of the country's 13,700 school districts for the 2021-22 school year, NEA reported that the pay gap in Texas is much worse for the most-experienced and highest-paid teachers than it is for first-year teachers.

Texas ranked 14th that year in starting teacher salaries with an average of \$45,493. That was about \$2,600 more than the national average of \$42,845.

But Texas ranked 39th among the 47 states that reported top teacher salaries. In Texas, these salaries vary among districts and are based on factors such as experience and advanced degrees and are usually earned by a district's most-experienced teachers. Texas' average top salary was \$64,739, more than \$13,000 less than the national average of \$77,931.

"Many of our first-year teachers spend only a few years in the classroom before they leave the profession," Molina said. "Inadequate pay and the continuing attacks and lack of respect for them as professionals are why, especially since pay is not keeping up with their abilities and their needs."

In another report based on the 2021-22 school year, NEA found that K-12 support employees (people such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teacher aides and clerks) averaged \$29,677 in pay, rating Texas 34th nationally and putting the state \$3,500 behind the national average.

Higher education support staff averaged \$42,282, or 31st in the country and about \$2,000 less than the national average.

"These are averages," Molina said. "Some of our support workers hardly make livable wages. TSTA is seeking money for substantial pay raises for them, as well as teachers, from the Legislature this session. It is getting late, but time would not be an issue if the governor and the legislative majority found the political will to do the right thing for our public schools, educators and students."