The Facts on Teacher Pay in NC

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

- Benjamin Franklin

1.5M
K–12 Public School Students

90k
Public School Teachers

22k
Instructional Staff



Investing in Teachers Is Investing in Student Success

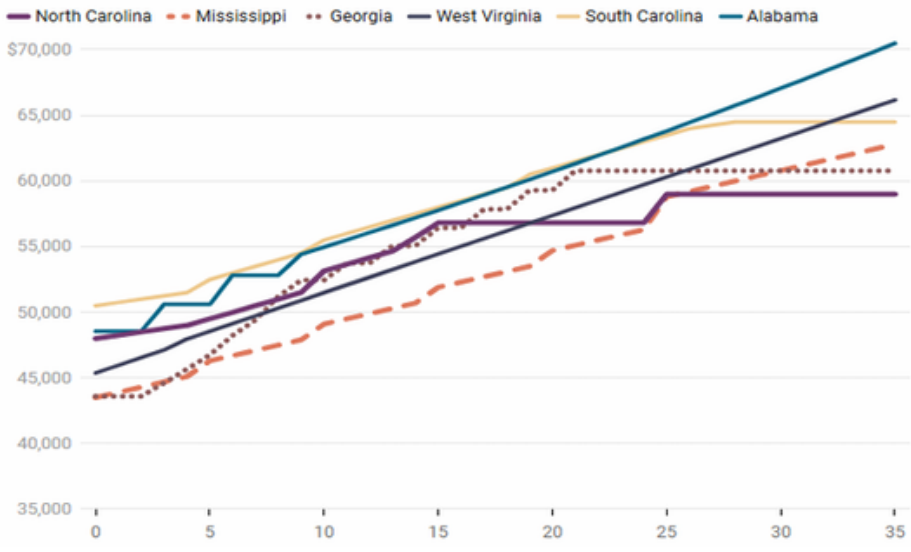
North Carolina's public school teachers play a critical role in student success and future opportunities. However, since 2011, state lawmakers have reduced teacher benefits and provided raises that have not kept pace with inflation, making teacher recruitment and retention more difficult. Competitive salaries and stronger support are essential to attracting and retaining quality educators and improving student outcomes.

2015–16 Salary
$49,294
Adjusted to 2026 dollars

2026–27 Salary
$48,000
2026 dollars

North Carolina's 2026–27 beginning teacher salary is $1,294 less than the inflation-adjusted starting salary in 2015–16.

2026-2027 Minimum State Salaries by Years of Experience for Southern Region



10 YEARS
No Salary Growth

For teachers with 15 - 24 years of experience, the North Carolina base salary stays at $56,820 (*$63,640 with National Board Certification*) with zero growth for ten years.

$59,000
Maximum Base Salary

In 2026-27, the top salary on the North Carolina salary schedule is $59,000, which a teacher reaches after 25 years.

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North Carolina Teachers Still Lag Behind in Pay

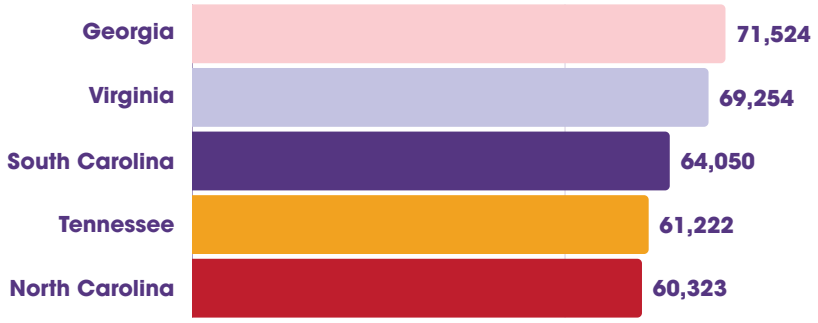
Despite recent raises, North Carolina teachers remain underpaid compared to the national average. According to NEA's 2026 state rankings, in 2024–25, NC's average teacher salary was $60,323, ranking 43rd nationally and $14,172 below the national average of $74,495. Local salary supplements create additional disparities, ranging from $0 to $11,612 depending on the district. Even teachers with 25+ years of experience earn approximately $15,500 less in state base pay than the 2024–25 national average.

2024-2025
$74,495
National Average Teacher Salary

2024-2025
$60,323
North Carolina Average Teacher Salary

In 2024-25, NC's average teacher salary was $14,172 less than the national average

Average Pay for NC and Surrounding States, NEA 2026 Ranking



43rd
2024–25
NC rank in National Average Teacher Pay

10.11%
2024–25 School Year
Teacher Attrition Rate

Removed in 2013
No Master's Pay

Local Teacher Salary Supplements (2025–26)

2025-2026
$11,612
Highest Supplement
Chapel Hill/Carrboro

2025-2026
$0
No Supplement
Graham County

Districts may use local funds to supplement the state base pay to attract applicants with a more professional salary. This creates disparities between districts that can afford local supplements and districts that cannot.

In 2025-26, NC average teacher salaries dropped 1%, emphasizing the crisis of neglect facing NC's public education system.

While the July 2026 budget includes raises, most increases benefit beginning teachers, leaving veteran educators with smaller gains.

"…the really great feeling you have when you're teaching and helping kids, that isn't something that pays your mortgage or pays your water bill…so ultimately, that was a definite big factor in why I decided to leave."

- Gina Guzzo, former Wake County educator

NC is known for its highly accredited educators, leading the nation in the number of teachers who have earned National Board Certification. Despite being highly qualified, these teachers are not properly compensated for their work, causing new and veteran educators to leave the profession.