

Isn't it
time teachers
heard some
good news?

MAKING

100

GRAND



\$104,496

By Pamela Wheaton-Shorr

We've all heard the depressing statistics about teacher salaries. In recent years, the average educator's salary—never lavish—has grown at a far slower rate than those of other professions, often even lagging behind inflation. And as we know all too well, when salaries are low, it's not just teachers who lose out. "Turnover is highest where teacher pay is lowest," says Texas education official, Carole Keeton Strayhorn. "They take their skills out of our schools and on to better-paying jobs." Harvard education researchers Susan Moore Johnson and Sarah Birkeland, whose work focuses on new teacher retention, put it bluntly—what teachers earn in the beginning and throughout their careers "determines who considers teaching, who gives it a try, and who ultimately stays."

While the overall numbers don't yet prove it—the average teacher salary according to the NEA is \$47,808—education policy experts are pointing to the bright spots in districts from Hawaii to New Jersey, where teacher pay is rising sharply, and suggest a new dawn may be approaching. The high exit rate from the teaching profession, combined with a projected shortage of 2.2 to 2.4 million teachers has legislators, superintendents, and perhaps even Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, nervous. Matt Moore, Senior Policy Analyst at the National Center for Policy Analysis, believes that simple supply and demand may force compensation upward. "We're going to have to start creating more and better incentives," Moore asserts, "and we're going to see this not at the national level, but at the local and the state."

All over the country, support is growing for raising beginning teacher salaries—the NEA recommends \$40,000 as a starting point—and for raising the cap for experienced teachers through merit-pay initiatives. "What the top dis-

tricts are paying sets the pace for the whole profession,” says Maryland teacher Jamie Seldon. “It shows that we can all get there.”

In search of top-pay districts

What does it take for a teacher to earn \$100K today? The ranks of teachers who have made it into six figures are growing. Five years ago, only 5,500 teachers earned \$100,000 or more, according to the Department of Education. Today, experts estimate nearly 20,000 teachers make salaries that are more than double the national average.

Instructor went looking for the best teacher salaries in the country and found, not surprisingly, the majority of these six-figure earners are located in pockets near cities with a high cost of living. For example, one out of every 12 teachers in the bedroom communities surrounding New York City—Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam counties—brings home more than \$100,000. In tony Scarsdale, New York, it is reported that more than half of the town’s teachers make six figures.

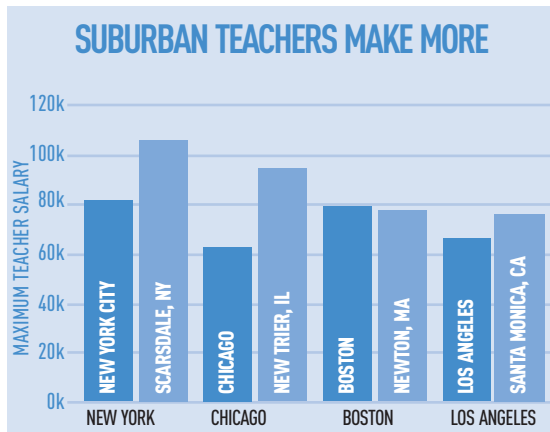
But it’s not just an East Coast phenomenon. A third of teachers in the Palatine-Schaumburg School District outside of Chicago make \$100K; and at least two hundred teachers in the Los Angeles Unified District earn six figures.

What’s more, whole communities are now pushing for teachers to climb the salary ladder. The city of Denver recently voted in an incentive plan that would raise the maximum pay most teachers could receive from \$60,000 to \$100,000. And in Hawaii, there’s a proposal to max the pay-scale for teachers at \$100,000 by 2009.

What teachers say

Even teachers making less in base salary are finding ways to break the \$100,000 mark. Supplemental contracts and extra responsibilities can boost so-

what teachers are making: the highs and the lows



There’s no denying the suburban advantage. Consider Chicago, where new teachers make \$34,538, almost 14% less than their suburban neighbors in New Trier Township. For experienced teachers, the difference is even greater. Chicago’s highest paid teachers are making \$63,276, whereas New Trier’s top teachers max out at \$94,545.

SOURCE: AMERICAN EDUCATOR, 2004. DISTRICT REPORTED NUMBERS.

the highs CITIES WHERE TEACHER PAY GOES THE FURTHEST

CITY	ADJUSTED PAY*	CITY	ADJUSTED PAY
1 PITTSBURGH, PA	\$55,571	6 EL PASO, TX	\$50,759
2 GRAND RAPIDS, MI	\$55,568	7 COLUMBUS, OH	\$50,291
3 BUFFALO, NY	\$52,148	8 LOUISVILLE, KY	\$48,902
4 CLEVELAND, OH	\$50,797	9 CINCINNATI, OH	\$48,856
5 MEMPHIS, TN	\$50,797	10 ATLANTA, GA	\$47,489

* CITY’S AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY ADJUSTED ACCORDING TO LOCAL COST OF LIVING.

Salary doesn’t tell the whole story. To get a good idea of how well teachers are doing, you need to know what a teacher’s dollar will buy locally. Here are the 10 cities where the relatively low cost of living insures that the average teacher’s salary goes far.

the lows CITIES WHERE IT DOESN'T PAY TO TEACH

CITY	ADJUSTED PAY*	CITY	ADJUSTED PAY
1 HONOLULU, HI	\$27,048	6 OKLAHOMA CITY	\$34,934
2 SAN FRANCISCO	\$32,663	7 SAN DIEGO, CA	\$35,210
3 LOS ANGELES	\$34,776	8 PHOENIX, AZ	\$35,934
4 JACKSON, MS	\$34,862	9 CHICAGO, IL	\$36,183
5 RALEIGH, NC	\$34,912	10 BOSTON, MA	\$37,336

Sometimes cost of living packs a punch. In San Francisco, housing costs that are three times the national level leave many teachers struggling to find a house or apartment they can afford. And the prices in Honolulu? Don’t even ask!

SOURCES: NEA, NATIONAL CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS, 2003-2004.



Where the bonuses are

Ready to pack your bags?

■ **VIRGINIA:** This state wants a few good math teachers for middle schools in academic trouble, and is willing to pay \$10K bonuses to snag them.

■ **TENNESSEE:** In Chattanooga, teachers who work in low-performing schools and see their students improve receive \$5,000 annual bonuses. The city has seen student performance improve in all its targeted schools.

■ **TEXAS:** As of January, Houston teachers can receive up to \$3,000 in extra pay if their students improve on state and national tests. The superintendent plans to raise it to \$10,000.

merit pay: pro & con

The debate is heating up.

PRO “The public school system currently offers virtually no incentives to reward excellence, and a system that does not reward excellence is unlikely to inspire it.”

—Louis V. Gerstner Jr, Commissioner of NYC’s Teaching Commission

CON “Instead of simply acknowledging that starting salaries are woefully low and committing to increasing them and finding the money for reasonably recurring raises, pols have wasted decades obsessing about something called merit pay. It’s a concept that works fine if you’re making widgets, but kids aren’t widgets and good teaching isn’t an assembly line.”

—Anna Quindlen, in Newsweek

SOURCES: VIRGINIA, EDUCATION WEEK; TENNESSEE, WWW.CHATTANOOGA.GOV; TEXAS, TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.

how teachers are bringing home extra pay? Meet four teachers willing to share their stories in the hope of encouraging better pay for all teachers.

Rosalie Dibert, instructional teacher leader

When Rosalie A. Dibert began her career in the Pittsburgh Public Schools 38 years ago, she made a mere \$4,200 a year. “That was considered a good salary back then!” she insists, with a laugh. Today, this award-winning special education teacher brings home \$103,000. “I happen to work for a school district that really values teachers,” she says, “and they always have.”

How does she do it? Dibert is on special assignment for her school system as an Instructional Teacher Leader, helping teachers in her district become certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Dibert mentors and supports teachers through the sometimes grueling task of becoming Board-certified. She meets



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with teachers after school, in the evenings, and on weekends, and fields their calls and e-mails. She’s also designed pre-candidate classes to help all teachers understand the process. It’s a big job. Dibert puts in about 11 hours a day during the week and works every other Saturday.

“I’m not embarrassed about the salary I make,” Dibert says, “but don’t skip the part that I absolutely love what I do.” It shows. Having recently undergone knee surgery, Dibert admits that she plans to sneak back into the building well before her sick leave is up. “My teachers need me!” she says. “And I just can’t wait to get back to work.”

David Patterson, music teacher

David T. Patterson is the band leader at Carson Middle School in Pennsylvania’s North Allegheny School District. After 33 years on the job, what matters first and foremost, says Patterson, is his passion for teaching. A sought-after sound technician, Patterson works on concerts during the summer months for area production companies, rubbing shoulders with everyone from Art Garfunkel to Los Lonely Boys. Patterson could easily leave teaching to do sound work full time, but instead he uses his extracurricular jobs to enrich his classroom. “What I learn goes back to the school with me—I get to see the latest stuff, the newest applications, and bring it back to the kids,” he says enthusiastically. In charge of running talent shows, the fall play, holiday events, and everything else that hits the brand new stage at Carson, Patterson is at the top of his pay scale, making about \$85,000 a year.

In addition, he has a supplemental contract as a stage manager, running lights and sound for outside groups who

rent the state-of-the-art auditorium at the district’s middle and high schools. That can bring in as much as \$15,000 a year. It’s a good living, but it takes a lot of time and energy, and nights and weekend hours. “To do what we do,” he says, “the passion and commitment has to be there first.”

Sam Harrell, head coach

Sam Harrell has lived and breathed coaching his whole life. His dad was a coach, and the younger Harrell grew up around athletics. Today, after 12 years as head football coach at Ennis High School in Ennis, Texas, Harrell earns about \$103,000 for following his passion.

"I didn't get into it for the money, but I've been doubly blessed," he explains. "I get to do what I love, and the district has been good to me." He started at Ennis making "somewhere in the 40's," he says. For a great high school coach, winning seasons tend to mean a flurry of job offers. Harrell says he never asked his district for more money, but when recruiters came calling, his administrators told him that they didn't want to lose him solely because of money. That has meant a number of nice pay raises throughout the years. "When classroom teachers help kids win big," says Harrell, "I'd love to see them get raises too."

Harrell puts in many extra hours during the school year and throughout the summer. From August to December, he's at the school seven days a week, gets home on game nights as late as midnight, and runs practice on Saturdays and Sundays. In January, spring training begins. "It's a year-round job," he says, "but in Texas, football is a pride thing. In a small community like this, people really come together around it."

Kevin Jarrett, school tech expert

Kevin Jarrett is the Technology Facilitator, K-4, of Northfield Community Schools in Northfield, New Jersey. It's a relatively new role for Jarrett. He was working in the private sector as an information technologist until just a few years ago, making a base salary of \$100,000 a year and incentive bonuses on top of that. But he has wanted to be a teacher his entire life, so he decided to make the leap. Now Jarrett earns only \$40,014. But he thinks he'll earn \$100,000 again by next year with his part-time teaching work at Walden University's



Overtime: more teachers are working more hours

50

Average number of hours per week teachers spend on all duties.

SOURCE: ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, 2001.

20%

of teachers work second jobs outside of school. For new teachers, the number's even higher.

SOURCE: NEA; STATUS OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER, 2001.

46%

of primary teachers don't get a lunch break. They spend it with their students.

SOURCE: NEA; STATUS OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER, 2001.

6 WAYS YOU CAN EARN MORE MONEY (WITHOUT LEAVING SCHOOL)

- 1 SPECIALIZE:** Consider moving into a hard-to-place subject, such as math, science, technology, or special ed.
- 2 BE A MENTOR:** More and more districts are paying for the kind of support and guidance you'd give new teachers anyway.
- 3 WORK LATER:** The after-three opportunities abound—after-school programs, coaching, tutoring, and more.
- 4 BE A LEADER:** As a department chair, grade-level chair, or committee chair, you'll get a chance to earn more money and gain a different perspective on your school.
- 5 GET YOUR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION:** It's a tough process but many teachers say you see the payoff in your paycheck and your teaching.

3 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU TAKE ON MORE

- 1 IS IT YOUR PASSION?** Spending your late afternoons coaching baseball or painting a school mural could inspire you—or not. If you don't love it, leave it to someone else.
- 2 DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?** Your teaching and your family responsibilities have to come first. Can you afford the two to three extra hours a day?
- 3 WILL IT BURN YOU OUT?** Teacher Joseph Maize of McMurry, Pennsylvania, was making more than \$100,000 until last year, with extra pay as a coach and athletic director. "I was never home," he says. "It got to be too much."

flexible hours

Salary isn't everything. For some teachers, flexibility comes first. To get the teachers they need, districts may need to consider alternatives, such as job-sharing, part-time work, reduced class loads, and online teaching. Second-grade teachers Lori Gehrman and Helen Minor are proof that such flexibility can work. Minor works Monday and Tuesday and Gehrman takes over on Thursdays and Fridays at Hull Elementary School in Chandler, AZ. The two alternate Wednesdays, "It's a piece of cake," says Minor. That's in large part because they're both so laid back, she says, and she adds, because they both over-prepare out of fear that the other one will have a problem. Half-pay is hard, they admit, but it's worth it.

(www.waldenu.edu) School of Education Master's Program and as a tech consultant for the district. Jarrett also leads after-school technology workshops for fellow teachers via the Southern Regional Educational Technology Training Center.

Finally, Jarrett is the district webmaster, for which he gets an annual stipend, and an advisor for the elementary school computer club. That's a lot of jobs, and it keeps him running morning, noon, and night. But Jarrett really doesn't seem to mind at all. "Teaching is far easier for me because it is a true calling," he says. "As hard as I work, I get an enormous, almost incalculable, infusion of energy from my students every day. I literally hate having summers off; I miss the interaction and energy I get from my students. I give them a hundred ten percent, and they give me a hundred fifty in return."

But is it all too much?

What do these four educators have in common besides high salaries? Killer work hours. All work at least 70 hours per week. And, studies show they are not alone. The number of hours spent working both in and out of the classroom is rising for teachers across the board. In 1991, teachers spent about 46 hours each week on work-related activities; by 2000, that number had jumped to just under 50 hours. So much for the oft-repeated myths about teachers' cushy short days and summers off.

More than a third of all teachers add to their base pay from school districts by picking up extra work during the school year, according to the NEA, and more than a fourth do so during the summer. Nationally, teachers averaged \$1,639 in extra pay for duties such as coaching or serving as department chair, and \$1,859

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In some cases, those extras add up to a much more comfortable income. Joseph C. Maize, a teacher in the Peters Township School District in McMurray, Pennsylvania, earned \$4,500 for coaching baseball six days a week, and an additional stipend of \$1,200 for taking on the task of equipment manager. It's a lot of hours, but a decent salary bump.

Steven Herraiz, a kindergarten teacher at John Muir Elementary School in San Francisco, hasn't fared as well taking on additional jobs for his school. He tutored a pre-service teacher recently,

which involved three months of supervising the candidate nine hours a week, preparing and providing feedback, meeting outside of classroom time, and coaching her on her lessons—all for the princely sum of \$50!

More pay for all teachers

While many teachers need and value extra stipends, perks, and other incentives and consider them a good thing for teaching, others, like NEA President Reg Weaver, argue that cobbled-together bonuses simply mask the bigger problem: all teachers in all schools in all

states ought to be earning a decent living wage. He points to the average teacher's starting salary, which hovers just under \$30,000, and the NEA's mission of starting the hiring process at a minimum of \$40,000. "Teaching offers many extrinsic rewards," says Weaver, "but supporting our families comes first."

If experts are right, the time is ripe for policy makers (and the voting public) to heed the call. We all know the teachers' career stories shared here are relatively rare. And they shouldn't be. Their salary numbers should be so common, so run of the mill, as to not be worthy of comment. A recent *Newsweek* article called for tying legislators' pay raises to those they give teachers. Not a bad idea. "If teachers can teach six-year-olds to add and get adolescents to attend to algebra, surely we can do the math to get them a decent wage," writes Anna Quindlen. "We owe them." □

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