

North Carolina Loses More Ground on Teacher Pay

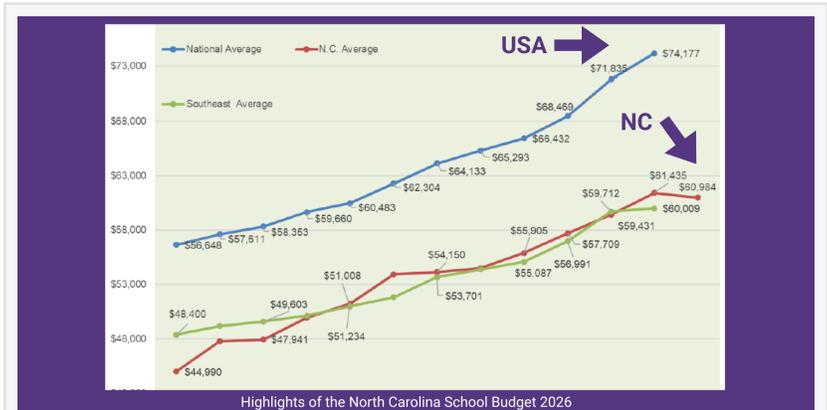
A new report shows that North Carolina's teacher salaries dropped this year, increasing the gap in national salary comparisons.

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget](#) annual report released last week underscores the impact of the state's budget stalemate. With Senate and House lawmakers unable to come to agreement on a budget last year, the state has kept its lights on through a "continuation budget" which maintained state funding at 2024-25 levels despite increasing costs.

As a result of no salary increases and cuts to programs that boosted teacher pay (e.g., mentor pay, advanced roles, and tutorial pay) the 2025-26 estimate of average teacher pay is 1% lower in real dollars than in 2024-25. This drop leaves North Carolina's teachers even further behind their national counterparts.

A chart in the Highlights report shows the trajectory of North Carolina's average teacher pay in comparison to national averages from 2013-14 through 2025-26. The large gap between the national average and North Carolina has widened in recent years, reaching \$12,742 in 2024-25. The latest drop in average teacher pay in North Carolina widens the gap even more.

In November 2025, the Reason Foundation (a libertarian think-tank) released its [Education Spending Spotlight](#). Researchers calculated change in cost/inflation-adjusted teacher pay since 2002 (see Table 5) and found that North Carolina's average teacher pay dropped 20.6% over 20 years (through 2022). North Carolina ranked #48 for salary growth, with the third largest drop in the nation. Only Indiana and Michigan teachers fared worse, but because their salaries started higher, their average salaries remained higher than North Carolina's.



NC Teacher Salary Compared to National Averages 2013-14 through 2024-25





If we truly believe that North Carolina's kids are the future, we must make the job of educating them more attractive."

North Carolina Governor Josh Stein

North Carolina currently [ranks #43 in the nation](#) in average teacher pay according to NEA's Educator Pay Data 2025 report. Based on the estimates released in the Highlights report, the state may drop even lower in coming years.

The Education Law Center put North Carolina almost last (50 of 51, including DC) in its state ranking of cost-adjusted funding level and last (50 of 50 states) in funding effort. (1) Current indicators suggest that North Carolina will retain

its low rankings unless lawmakers make drastic funding changes in upcoming budgets.

Governor Josh Stein has been urging lawmakers to pass the Critical Needs Budget in advance of the upcoming legislative session to boost teacher salaries and fill Medicaid funding gaps. (2) The Critical Needs Budget would raise teacher salaries an average of 5.8% in 2025-26, bringing state salaries closer to the national average and eliminating the 1% drop revealed in the Highlights report.

1. Education Law Center Making the Grade report: <https://edlawcenter.org/research/making-the-grade/>
2. Critical Needs Budget: <https://www.osbm.nc.gov/govcriticalneedsbudgetrec/open>

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