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Montana's Beginning Teacher Salary Lowest in the Nation

Washington, D.C.—Montana ranked last in the nation for its 2002-03 beginning teacher salary of \$23,052, according to the annual teacher salary survey released by the American Federation of Teachers on Thursday.

Montana ranked 47th in the nation for its average teacher salary for the 2002-03 school year, at \$35,754, up 4 percent from the previous year. Montana placed last, or 51st, for its average beginning teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$23,052, up 3.2 percent. The AFT estimates that Montana's starting salary for the most recent school year, 2003-04, was \$23,790.

Regionally, Montana was outpaced by neighboring Idaho, which was 32nd, at \$39,784; and Wyoming, which was 42nd at \$37,789, North Dakota was 49th at \$33,869.

Across the country, teachers' salaries remained relatively stagnant while their share of health benefits rose at all-time high rates, making it difficult to attract and keep good teachers at a time when they are increasingly needed, the report said.

Nationally, the 2002-03 average teacher salary, which is the most recent figure available, was \$45,771, up 3.3 percent from the previous year. The average beginning teacher salary was \$29,564, up 3.2 percent from the year before. But AFT's report noted that teachers' share of health insurance costs spiked an average 13 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Exorbitant health insurance costs are taking an intolerable bite out of already inadequate teacher salaries. Teachers are being asked to do more, shortages persist in the most challenging areas to teach, yet compensation packages are insulting," said AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward J. McElroy.

Furthermore, the AFT noted, superintendents' average salaries are as much as four times higher than teachers' average pay. "States and school districts are crying poverty when it comes to teachers' pay yet somehow find money for extravagant administrator salaries," McElroy said.

California led the nation with the highest average teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$55,693. South Dakota had the nation's lowest average teacher salary, at \$32,414. Alaska led the nation with the highest average beginning teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$37,401. Montana had the nation's lowest average beginning teacher salary, at \$23,052.

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The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Table 1

Average Teacher Salary in 2002-03, State Rankings

Rank	State	Teachers	2002-03 Average Salary		2001-02 Average Salary	Percent Change
1	California	313,330	\$ 55,693	b	\$ 54,348	2.5%
2	Michigan	96,506	54,020	c	52,428	3.0%
3	Connecticut	42,754	53,962		52,376	3.0%
4	New Jersey	105,580	53,872		50,115	7.5%
5	District of Columbia	5,235	53,194		51,796	* 2.7%
6	New York	243,072	53,017	d	51,020	3.9%
7	Rhode Island	10,754	52,879		51,619	2.4%
8	Massachusetts	68,003	52,415		48,732	6.6%
9	Illinois	133,377	51,496	e	49,679	3.7%
10	Pennsylvania	120,015	51,425		50,599	1.6%
11	Maryland	57,050	50,410		48,251	4.5%
12	Delaware	7,402	49,821		49,011	1.7%
13	Alaska	8,120	49,694		49,028	1.4%
14	Oregon	29,915	47,463		46,033	3.1%
15	Ohio	119,954	45,515		44,266	2.8%
16	Georgia	101,977	45,414		43,933	3.4%
17	Indiana	61,623	44,966	f	44,609	0.8%
18	Washington	52,983	44,961		43,470	3.4%
19	Minnesota	57,471	44,745		42,175	6.1%
20	Virginia	90,952	42,778	f	41,752	2.5%
21	Hawaii	10,943	42,768		44,306	-3.5%
22	Colorado	43,519	42,679		40,659	5.0%
23	North Carolina	86,325	42,411		42,118	0.7%
24	Vermont	8,167	42,038		39,771	5.7%
25	New Hampshire	13,676	41,909		39,915	5.0%
26	Nevada	20,781	41,795		44,621	-6.3%
27	Wisconsin	59,442	41,617	g	41,056	1.4%
28	South Carolina	46,508	40,362	h	39,923	1.1%
29	Florida	125,798	40,281		39,275	2.6%
30	Texas	276,719	39,972		39,230	1.9%
31	Arizona	45,656	39,955		38,744	* 3.1%
32	Idaho	14,505	39,784		39,194	1.5%
33	Alabama	46,316	39,524		37,206	6.2%
34	Tennessee	58,984	39,186		38,515	1.7%
35	Maine	16,895	38,518		37,300	3.3%
36	West Virginia	20,190	38,497		36,775	4.7%
37	Kentucky	40,937	38,486		37,457	* 2.7%
38	Utah	21,900	38,268		38,153	0.3%
39	Kansas	32,207	38,030		37,059	2.6%
40	Iowa	38,000	38,000		37,243	* 2.0%
41	Nebraska	21,180	37,896		36,236	4.6%
42	Wyoming	6,897	37,789		37,353	-0.2%
43	Missouri	62,952	37,641		36,053	4.4%
44	Arkansas	30,134	37,536	g	36,026	4.2%
45	Louisiana	50,727	37,116	g	36,328	2.2%
46	New Mexico	20,085	37,054	i	36,716	0.9%
47	Montana	10,427	35,754		34,379	4.0%
48	Mississippi	34,184	35,135		33,295	5.5%
49	North Dakota	8,300	33,869		32,468	4.3%
50	Oklahoma	41,180	33,277		32,870	1.2%
51	South Dakota	8,783	32,414		31,383	3.3%
U.S. Average 2002-03			\$ 45,771			
*U.S. Average 2001-02			\$ 44,327			
Change in Current Dollars			\$ 1,444			
Percent Change			3.3%			
	Virgin Islands	1,660	\$ 34,764	a		
	Guam	750	34,738			
	Puerto Rico	37,777	22,164	a		

* Note: These averages are based on revised data from state departments of education. a. figures from 2001-02. b. includes benefits where applicable. c. AFT estimate. d. median. e. includes fringe benefits, pension pick-up and extra-duty pay where applicable. f. includes supplemental pay. g. includes extra-duty pay. h. includes incentives. i. includes health insurance where applicable. j. revised AFT estimate

Sources: American Federation of Teachers, annual survey of state departments of education. *Early Estimates of Public Elementary and Secondary Education Statistics 2001-02*, U.S. Department of Education, April 2003. *National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2002, May 2003.

Table 2
Actual Average Beginning Teacher Salaries 2002-03, Estimated 2004

Rank	State	2002-03 Beginning Salary		2001-02 Beginning Salary	Percent Change	2003-04 Estimated Beginning Salary
1	Alaska	\$ 37,401		\$ 36,035 *	3.8%	\$ 38,597
2	New Jersey	35,673	a	35,311	1.0%	36,815
3	District of Columbia	35,260		33,581 *	5.0%	36,388
4	New York	35,259	b	32,549 *	8.3%	36,387
5	California	34,805	c	34,180	1.8%	35,919
6	Illinois	34,522	d	31,761	8.7%	35,627
7	Hawaii	34,000		32,000 *	6.3%	35,088
8	Georgia	33,919		32,561 *	4.2%	35,005
9	Delaware	33,811		32,868	2.9%	34,893
10	Michigan	33,596	a	32,649	2.9%	34,671
11	Massachusetts	33,168	a	32,746	1.3%	34,230
12	Maryland	32,939		31,940 *	3.1%	33,993
13	Pennsylvania	32,897		31,866	3.2%	33,950
14	Oregon	32,804		31,726 *	3.4%	33,854
15	Nevada	32,169		31,665 *	1.6%	33,198
16	Colorado	32,063		30,576 *	4.9%	33,089
17	Texas	31,874		30,938	3.0%	32,894
18	Virginia	31,414	a, e	31,238	0.6%	32,420
19	Rhode Island	31,025	a	30,272	2.5%	32,018
20	Alabama	31,000		29,538 *	4.9%	31,992
21	Florida	30,491		29,733 *	2.5%	31,467
22	Louisiana	29,288		28,229 *	3.8%	30,225
23	Indiana	29,144	e	28,352 *	2.8%	30,077
24	Washington	29,118		28,348	2.7%	30,050
25	Tennessee	29,045		28,074 *	3.5%	29,974
26	Kentucky	28,886		26,813	7.7%	29,770
27	Ohio	28,866		27,484 *	5.0%	29,790
28	Connecticut	28,348		26,525 *	8.8%	29,771
29	South Carolina	28,672	f	28,295 *	1.3%	29,590
30	Minnesota	28,600		27,400 *	4.4%	29,515
31	New Mexico	28,120	g	27,579	2.0%	29,020
32	Missouri	28,075		27,602 *	1.7%	28,973
33	Oklahoma	27,684		27,215 *	1.7%	28,570
34	North Carolina	27,572		27,572 *	0.0%	28,454
35	Wisconsin	27,277	h	27,397	-0.4%	28,150
36	Utah	27,135	a	26,806	1.2%	28,003
37	Nebraska	27,127		26,010	4.3%	27,995
38	Iowa	26,967		26,893 *	0.3%	27,830
39	Kansas	26,855	a	26,596	1.0%	27,714
40	West Virginia	26,692		25,633	4.1%	26,692 j
41	New Hampshire	26,479		25,611	3.4%	27,326
42	Mississippi	26,120		24,482 *	6.7%	26,956
43	Idaho	26,072		25,316	3.0%	26,906
44	Wyoming	25,694	a	24,898 *	3.2%	26,516
45	Vermont	25,240		25,229	0.0%	26,048
46	Arkansas	24,972		24,291 *	2.8%	25,771
47	Maine	24,631		24,054	2.4%	25,419
48	South Dakota	24,311		23,938	1.6%	25,089
49	North Dakota	23,591		22,004 *	7.2%	24,346
50	Arizona	23,548	h	24,972 *	-5.7%	24,302
51	Montana	23,052		22,344 *	3.2%	23,790
U.S. Average		\$ 29,564		\$ 28,661	3.2%	\$ 30,496
Difference 2002-03		\$ 903				
Percent change		3.2%				
Guam		\$ 29,878		\$ 29,878 *		
Puerto Rico		18,000	i	18,000		
Virgin Islands		na		na		

* Note: These averages are based on revised data from state departments of education. a. AFT estimate. b. fifth percentile considered beginning salary. c. includes benefits where applicable. d. includes fringe benefits, pension pick-up and extra-duty pay where applicable. e. includes supplemental pay. f. includes incentives. g. includes health insurance where applicable. h. includes extra-duty pay. i. figures from 2001-02. j. 2003-04 beginning salary provided by state department of education.

Sources: American Federation of Teachers, annual survey of state departments of education. *Early Estimates of Public Elementary and Secondary Education Statistics 2001-02*, U.S. Department of Education, April 2003. National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2002, May 2003. *Employment Cost Index 2004*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2004.

