



Bureau Brief

Teacher Salary

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The issue of teachers' salary has long been a chief concern in assessing the adequacy of the state's educational system. During the Lake View lawsuit, the courts cited Arkansas's comparatively low teacher salaries and wide wage disparities among districts in the state. In 2003, the Arkansas General Assembly addressed the concerns by passing new taxes to generate additional funding for a variety of educational reforms, including a raise for teachers. Act 59 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 raised the statutory minimum salary nearly 26% and increased the other steps of the salary schedule by 20-25%. Most recently, the Arkansas General Assembly enacted Act 170 of 2019 and raised the minimum salary schedules for each school year 2019-20 (2020) through 2022-23 (2023).

Minimum Salary

Ark. Code Ann. §6-17-2403 establishes the minimum salary schedule for teachers in Arkansas. The minimum salary for 2020 for a teacher with a bachelor degree and zero years of experience is \$32,800, and the minimum salary for a teacher with a master degree and zero years of experience is \$37,450. For each additional year of teaching experience, districts must pay an additional \$450 for teachers with a bachelor degree and \$500 for teachers with a master degree through 15 years of teaching experience. The table below provides the 2020 minimum salary amounts for bachelor and master degree prepared teachers.

Years of Exp.	Bachelor Degree	Master Degree	Difference
0	\$32,800	\$37,450	\$4,650
1	\$33,250	\$37,950	\$4,700
2	\$33,700	\$38,450	\$4,750
3	\$34,150	\$38,950	\$4,800
4	\$34,600	\$39,450	\$4,850
5	\$35,050	\$39,950	\$4,900
6	\$35,500	\$40,450	\$4,950
7	\$35,950	\$40,950	\$5,000
8	\$36,400	\$41,450	\$5,050
9	\$36,850	\$41,950	\$5,100
10	\$37,300	\$42,450	\$5,150
11	\$37,750	\$42,950	\$5,200
12	\$38,200	\$43,450	\$5,250
13	\$38,650	\$43,950	\$5,300
14	\$39,100	\$44,450	\$5,350
15	\$39,550	\$44,950	\$5,400

The new minimum salary level Act 170 established for teachers with a bachelor degree and zero years of experience are:

- \$32,800 in 2019-20
- \$33,800 in 2020-21
- \$34,900 in 2021-22
- \$36,000 in 2022-23

In 2019-20, 71 of the 235 districts used the statutory minimum as their minimum salary.

Average Salary

According to the National Education Association (NEA) report, *Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020*, the national average salary in 2019 was \$62,304. Arkansas's 2019 average teacher salary as reported by NEA was \$49,438, and ranks 46th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 13th among the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states, and 6th among surrounding states.

The Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) calculates the average teacher salary differently from the NEA. Under BLR's methodology, the 2019 average teacher salary for school districts (not including charters) was \$51,059 and open enrollment public charter schools' 2019 average teacher salary was \$42,925.

Salary Used for Matrix Calculation

To calculate the 2018-19 per-student foundation funding rate, the matrix used a base salary of \$52,386. An additional 22% of that amount is added for fringe benefits (14% for retirement and 8% for Social Security, Medicare, unemployment and workers' compensation) and a flat rate of \$1,900 for health insurance (\$157.50 for 6 months and \$159.10 for 6 months) is also added to arrive at the total 2018-19 matrix salary and benefits cost of \$65,811.

	2018-19
Teacher Salary in Matrix	\$52,386
Retirement	\$7,334
Social Sec., Medicare, Unemployment, Wrkr's Comp.	\$4,191
Health Insurance	\$1,900
Total = Salary + Fringe	\$65,811

This total compensation amount of \$65,811 is multiplied by the 33.69 school-level employees needed for a 500-student school. On a per-student basis, teacher compensation makes up \$4,434, or 65% of the total \$6,781 foundation funding amount. Of the \$3.2 billion in total foundation funding provided to districts and charters in 2018-19, about \$2.1 billion was intended to support teacher salaries.