

Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy Brief

Teacher Compensation

July 2018



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Center for
Fiscal Policy

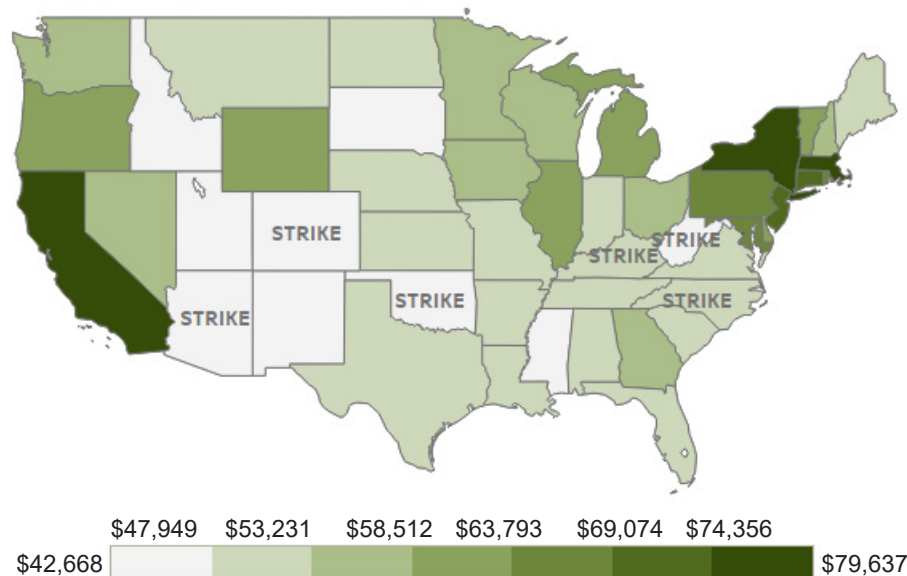
Well-qualified, effective teachers are the most important investment we make in education. Teacher compensation has a positive relationship with teacher retention and student performance, increasing the likelihood that children will finish high school and be prepared for the work force.¹ As the state enters its fourth year of implementing a five-year career ladder investment plan, Idaho teacher pay and retention continue to be lower than the national average.² While the state put an additional \$100 million towards K-12 public school funding last year, other priorities on the policy agenda will make it difficult to continue the effort to attract and maintain quality teachers.

School districts often rely on supplemental property tax levies to make up for limited state resources, putting communities with higher property wealth in a better position to attract certified and more experienced teachers. Children with families that struggle to make ends meet and those who live in rural parts of the state are more likely to experience higher teacher turnover, have less experienced teachers, and have a teacher who is not fully certified. As teachers wrap up salary negotiations for the coming school year, this brief summarizes how Idaho stacks up against the rest of the country in teacher compensation and the resulting implications for children across the state.

Idaho Teacher Compensation Comparable to States with Teacher Strikes

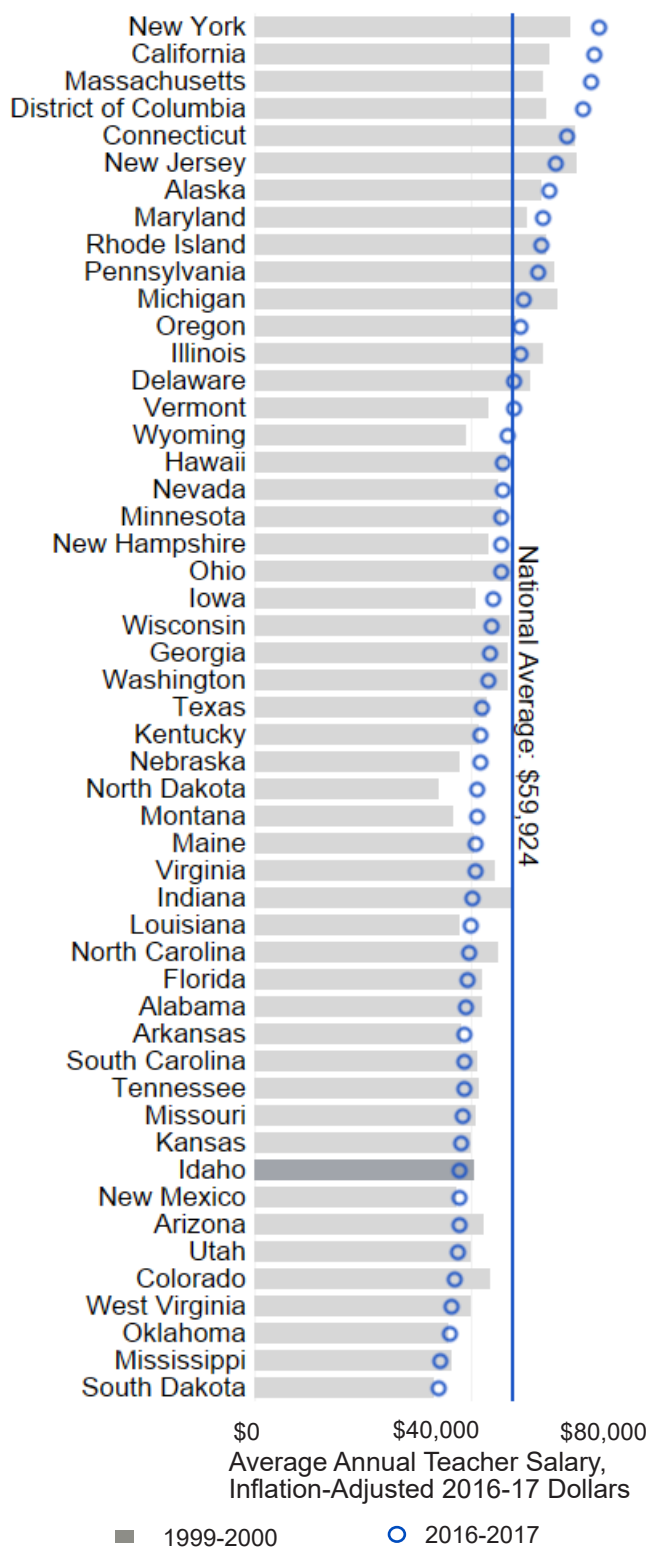
In 2013, stakeholders identified a strong teacher career ladder as one of several drivers of quality K-12 education in Idaho. Governor Otter’s Task Force on Improving Education recommended an additional \$250 million be dedicated to attracting quality teachers and making sure our current educators have the skills they need to prepare Idaho’s children for the workforce. The latest nationwide data show that Idaho now ranks 43rd in the nation for teacher compensation, hovering near many states where teacher strikes occurred this year.³ Educators in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and West Virginia have resorted to walkouts or strikes to demand increased school funding in the last year, as seen in Figure 1. Arizona’s teachers earned just \$101 less than Idaho’s teachers in 2016-2017. Meanwhile teachers who walked out in Kentucky earned \$4,835 more than their Idaho counterparts.

Figure 1: Average Annual Teacher Salary, by State, 2016-2017



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Figure 2: Average Annual Teacher Salary, by State, 1999-2000 and 2016-2017, Adjusted for Inflation



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Idaho Teachers Earn Less Now Than Two Decades Ago

Nationwide, the typical teacher's salary can buy less now than two decades ago. The average teacher in the United States has more than 13 years of experience and earns \$59,924 – a 1.8 percent decrease in earnings from 1999-2000, after accounting for inflation (Figure 2).⁴

Idaho teachers earn \$12,420 less than the national average and have seen a greater drop in real earnings over time. Here, teachers have seen a 6.8 percent drop in salaries since 1999-2000 when adjusting for inflation and earn on average \$47,504 annually.

While the cost of living in Idaho is lower than most states, it does not make up for our lower teacher salaries. All told, 20 states are cheaper to live in than Idaho is, but there are only eight states that pay their teachers less.⁵

Increasing Share of Teachers Not Fully Certified for Their Assignments

Student enrollment in Idaho has grown by six percentage points over five years, increasing the need to attract and maintain teachers.⁶ Despite being the fastest growing state in the nation, there are still reports of school districts that struggle to hire qualified candidates.^{7,8} An inability to offer competitive salaries may contribute to the rising number of instructors that are not fully certified for their position.

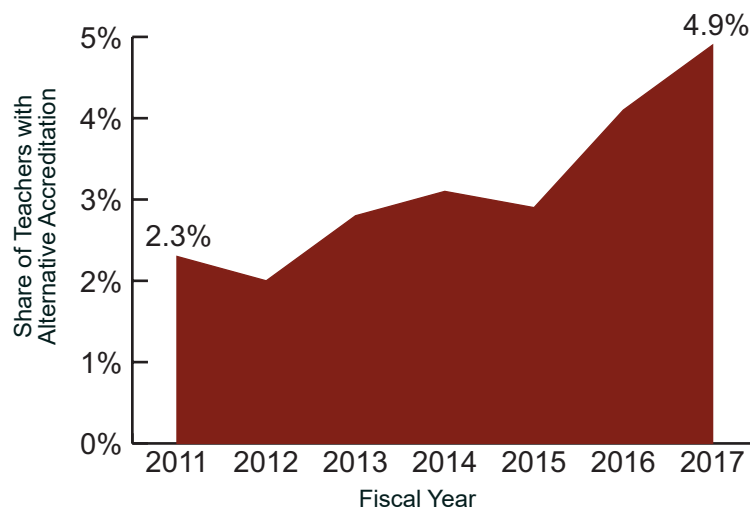
Alternative authorizations are available in Idaho for teachers who do not hold an appropriate certificate or endorsement for the assigned duties of their position. In 2010-2011, there were 415 teachers with alternative authorizations.⁹ At that time, most alternative authorizations went to teachers that were certified to teach a subject and lacked an endorsement for a new subject they now wanted to teach.

Since then, there has been an increase in the share of alternative authorizations that go to teachers with an online certification from the nonprofit American Board for Teacher Excellence and those deemed to be content specialists. There are currently 931 teachers with alternative authorizations in the state.

The rate of teachers in the classroom with alternative authorizations has more than doubled from 2.3 percent in 2010-2011 to 4.9 percent in 2016-2017, as seen in Figure 3. Children in rural parts of Idaho are most impacted by this trend. The share of teachers with alternative authorizations is nearly 45 percent higher in rural schools than in nonrural schools.¹⁰

Recent measures taken by the state will likely increase the share of teachers that are not fully certified for their assignments. In an effort to help school districts combat Idaho's teacher shortage, the State Board of Education voted in support of a new path to alternative authorization at the end of 2017.¹¹ The new 'mastery-based' alternative will allow those with a degree and expertise in a subject area to teach without meeting standard teacher preparation coursework requirements through a college of education.

Figure 3: Share of Idaho Teachers Not Fully Certified for Assignments



Source: Idaho Department of Education

Retaining Teachers is Critical to Idaho's Education Goals

In addition to the challenge of recruiting new teachers to keep up with a growing population, Idaho is losing existing teachers. About one in five teachers in Idaho do not return to their school the following year, a rate that is nearly four percentage points higher than the national average.¹² Schools that are low-performing or high-poverty struggle most with attrition, often facing a reduced teaching staff the following year.

At the recommendation of Governor Otter's Task Force on Improving Education, the State Board of Education produced a report on the teacher pipeline in 2017 to learn more about teacher shortages. It found that about a third of teachers who are certified in Idaho each year are not employed as teachers in our state.¹³ For example in 2016-2017, Idaho issued 1,952 teaching certificates and 718 of these teachers chose not to practice their profession in Idaho. The report also found that the share of teachers leaving their position for retirement is higher than the national average. Overall the number of new teacher certifications in the state would be able to keep up with retirement and increased enrollment were it not for teachers leaving before retirement. The report continues,

*"In fact, there would be a surplus of teachers certificated every year. However, statewide data from multiple sources indicates steady, **preretirement age attrition** to be the greatest contributor to Idaho's teacher shortage; and a critical issue we must further explore to define the specific causes."*

Education stakeholders have raised concerns about the potential impact of teacher attrition on Idaho's children. Positions are often filled by a less experienced teacher when a replacement is found, which research shows may hinder student achievement.¹⁴ As with most professions, experience in the classroom allows teachers to hone their skills, yielding lower rates of absenteeism and higher test scores according to several studies. The share of teachers in Idaho with less than four years of experience increased from 17 percent in 2011-2012 to 24 percent in 2016-2017.¹⁵

To achieve benchmarks put forth by Governor Otter's Task Force on Improving Education, Idaho will need to dedicate an additional \$48 million towards the teacher career ladder. These investments will be a step toward improving Idaho's ability to attract and maintain highly skilled teachers, however, challenges will likely remain. Recent tax changes are expected to decrease general revenue available for public schools, especially during economic downturns. This could leave tough choices ahead if Idaho intends to meet its education goals.

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