



## AFT News Release

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**EMBARGOED UNTIL:**  
**12:01 a.m. Thursday, July 15**

### **New Jersey in Top Tier of States for its Teacher Salaries**

**Washington, D.C.** – New Jersey’s average teacher salary jumped 7.5 percent to rank the Garden State the fourth highest-paying state in the nation, according to the American Federation of Teachers’ annual teacher salary survey released Thursday.

New Jersey’s 2002-03 average teacher salary was \$53,872, up 7.5 percent from the previous year. New Jersey ranked second for its average beginning teacher salary at \$35,673, up 1 percent from the previous year. The AFT estimates that New Jersey’s average starting salary for the most recent school year, 2003-04, was \$36,815.

Regionally, New Jersey bested its neighbors for average teacher salary. New York was sixth at \$53,017; Pennsylvania was 10th at \$51,425, and Delaware was 12th at \$49,821.

Across the country, teachers’ salaries remained relatively stagnant while their share of health benefits rose at all-time 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 figures available, was \$45,771, up 3.3 percent from the previous year, and the average beginning teacher salary was \$29,564, up 3.2 percent from the previous year. 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.*

