

New York State Teacher Salary Report

BY: ALEX COLVIN, SALLY KLINGEL, SIMON BOEHME, AND SUSANNE DONOVAN

DECEMBER 2013

Teachers are central to the success of any education system and the salaries paid to teachers are among the most important issues for both school districts and the unions that represent teachers. For school districts, teacher salaries are a major component of district budgets. Teacher salary levels are also a crucial factor in attracting and retaining quality educators. This report presents data on teacher salary levels based on teacher contracts throughout New York State. In addition to reporting overall statewide salary levels, it also documents the wide variation in teacher salary levels across New York State.

This New York State Teacher Salary Report was prepared by the Bargaining for Better Schools (BBS) project, which is an initiative of the ILR School at Cornell University through the Scheinman Institute on Conflict Resolution and the Worker Institute.

The data provided in this report comes from an analysis of the teacher contracts from every school district in the State of New York. The database of information came from two sources, both of which are publicly available on websites: DigitalCommons at ILR and SeeThroughNY, each of which contain the full text of teacher contracts, i.e. collective bargaining agreements and associated memoranda of understanding. The most recent contract from either website was selected for inclusion in this data.

Salary Structure

In teacher contracts, a salary schedule determines the pay structure. The salary schedule typically specifies small increases in base pay for each year of service to a school district. This is called a step. The average number of steps on a salary schedule is 24. A salary schedule may also contain base pay increases or bonuses after a teacher reaches a certain number of years of employment in a district. These rewards for longevity are not the only source of pay increases for teachers. Attainment of degrees or education credits are another way to make more money, in addition to across-the-board wage percentage increases that may be negotiated in each contract. And, typically, a salary schedule will have different starting salaries for a teacher entering with a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

The most important salary schedules are those for teachers with a Master's degree. According to New York's Department of Education, over 90% of all teachers in New York have at least a Master's degree.

The salary levels we report based on the contract salary schedules are related to, but different from salaries calculated based on averaging teacher pay. The latter will be influenced by the average years of experience of teachers in the district and may go up or down as more senior teachers retire and more junior teachers are hired or laid-off. By contrast, our results show what a given teacher in a district is paid based on his or her individual years of experience and education level, according to the salary schedule specified in the collective bargaining agreement.

State of Salaries

Statewide

Table I presents statistics on the salary levels in contracts across the entire state. We report the salary levels specified in the contracts for teachers with a Bachelor's degree and for teachers with a Master's degree. To capture the progression over time, we report salary levels at both degree levels for entry level teachers, teachers with 10 years' experience, and teachers with 20 years' experience

In the median or typical New York State contract (i.e. half the contracts pay more and half less than this level), a starting teacher with a Master's degree is paid \$43,928. With experience this goes up, so that after 20 years that same teacher working under the median contract would be paid \$69,460. Teachers with only a Bachelor's degree tend to be paid a few thousand dollars less, so that a starting teacher without a Master's under the median contract would only make \$40,083.

Statewide Median Teacher Salary Rates				
	Lowest	Median	Average	Highest
BA – Entry	\$29,100	\$40,083	\$42,247	\$62,752
BA +10 years	\$35,479	\$49,906	\$54,947	\$89,830
BA +20 years	\$36,900	\$64,323	\$68,485	\$111,441
MA – Entry	\$32,168	\$43,928	\$47,215	\$87,500
MA +10 years	\$37,946	\$54,109	\$61,651	\$110,568
MA +20 years	\$38,880	\$69,514	\$77,520	\$131,044

Table I

The average contract salary level is higher than the median contract salary, reflecting the existence of a smaller number of contracts with relatively high pay levels, which skews the average pay number upwards. Overall, the results show a wide variation in teacher salary levels across the state. For example, whereas the lowest salary level for a teacher with a Master’s and 10 years of experience is only \$37,946, the most generous contract for the same type of teacher pays \$110,568. In the following sections we explore how teacher salaries vary by region and by type of community.

Region

The map in Figure I displays the median contract salary levels of teachers with a Master’s degree or equivalent plus 10 years of experience, using the Economic Development Regions (EDRs) boundaries designated by New York State. The map points to clear salary differentials across the state. Long Island and Mid-Hudson are the regions with the highest salary levels. New York City comes in third. By contrast, teacher salary levels in up-state New York are much lower. In the three EDRs with the lowest salaries—the Finger Lakes, the Southern Tier, and Mohawk Valley—teachers with similar qualifications and experience make around 40% less than their downstate counterparts.

The graph in Figure II provides further regional breakdowns by teacher experience level. The earnings of teachers vary greatly depending on their longevity and where the teacher works. Specifically, the median salary level of a Long Island teacher just starting with a Master’s is similar to the median salary of a

teacher in the Finger Lakes with 20 years of experience and is higher than the salary of a similar teacher with 20 years of experience in the Southern Tier. Whereas all regions show salaries increasing with experience, the returns to experience can vary considerably depending on where a teacher is employed. For example, salaries in Long Island almost double from \$58,299 at the entry level to \$106,505 at the 20 year experience level, whereas the returns to experience are much smaller in Central New York where teachers with a Master’s go from \$44,017 at the entry level to \$56,487 after 20 years, only a 28% increase.

Type of Community

Teacher salary levels also vary by the type of community the district is located in. Table II shows median contract salary rates for varying levels of experience for four different categories of community: city, suburban, town, and rural.

Suburban communities have the highest salary rates at all levels of experience, with a median rate of \$55,706 for new teachers with a Master’s degree, rising to a median rate of \$98,788 for teachers with a Master’s plus 20 years of experience, a 77% increase. Teachers in city, town, and rural communities all start at similar median salary rates with a Master’s of just over \$40,000. In cities, the median salary rate rises by 90% to \$76,595 after 20 years. By contrast, salary rates do not rise as much with experience in town and rural communities, where the median salary rate for a teacher with a Master’s and 20 years’ experience is only about 55% higher than that of a new teacher with a Master’s.

MEDIAN SALARY RATES FOR TEACHERS WITH A MASTER’S DEGREE AND 10 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BY REGION

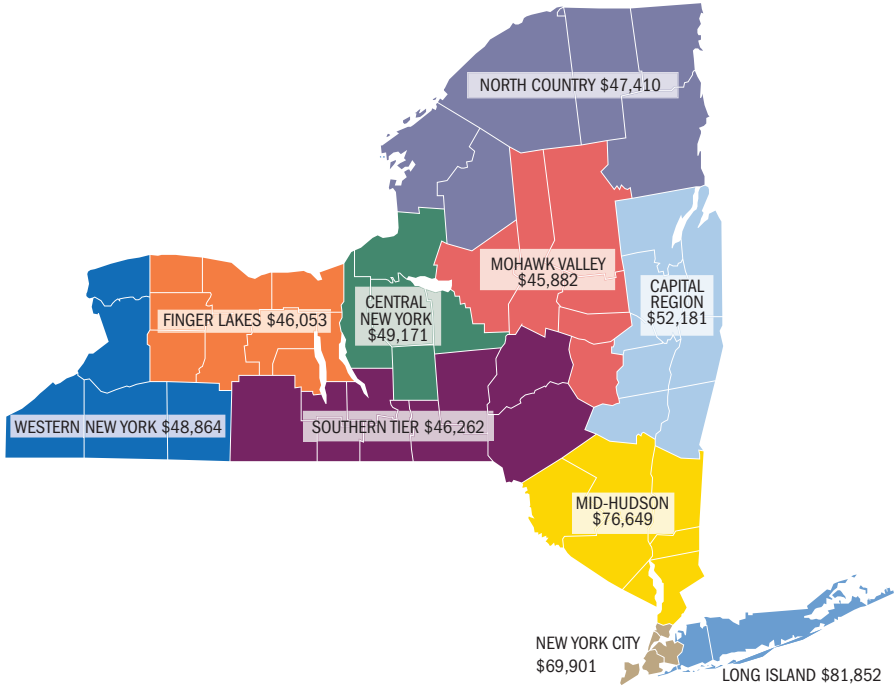


Figure I

Conclusion

The data presented here shows the wide disparities in teacher salary levels across New York State. The lowest paid teachers in the Mohawk Valley make barely over half of what the wealthiest region, Long Island, pays. The disparities are found in the type of communities as well. Town and rural areas are not paid as much as the suburban areas, which have the highest teacher salaries. City areas tend to start out with a salary similar as towns and rural areas but soon outpace these areas as a teacher stays longer with a district, but even experienced city teachers do not reach the pay levels found amongst their suburban counterparts. Although it is the case that more experienced teachers in some parts of the state can earn relatively higher salaries of \$100,000 or more, it is also the case that in many parts of the state teacher salaries are much more modest, in the \$40,000-\$60,000 range, even for experienced teachers.

These differences clearly in part reflect variations in the ability of school districts to pay. The wealthier regions and types of communities in New York State pay teachers much higher salary levels than do other parts of the state. Notably, teacher salaries in upstate New York lag far behind their downstate counterparts.

Median Teacher Salary Rates by Community Type

	Masters Entry	Masters 10 Years	Masters 20 Years
City	\$40,353	\$53,000	\$76,595
Suburb	\$55,706	\$78,895	\$98,788
Town	\$40,485	\$49,379	\$62,378
Rural	\$40,099	\$48,500	\$62,674

Table 2

The regions and communities that pay more generally have higher costs of living, but not by so much as to account for the differences we find. For example, while costs of living in Western New York are 26% lower than on Long Island, salaries of teachers in Western New York are 40% lower than their counterparts on Long Island. In considering the need to attract and retain high quality educators, it is important to consider these relative salary levels.

MEDIAN TEACHER SALARY RATES BY REGION

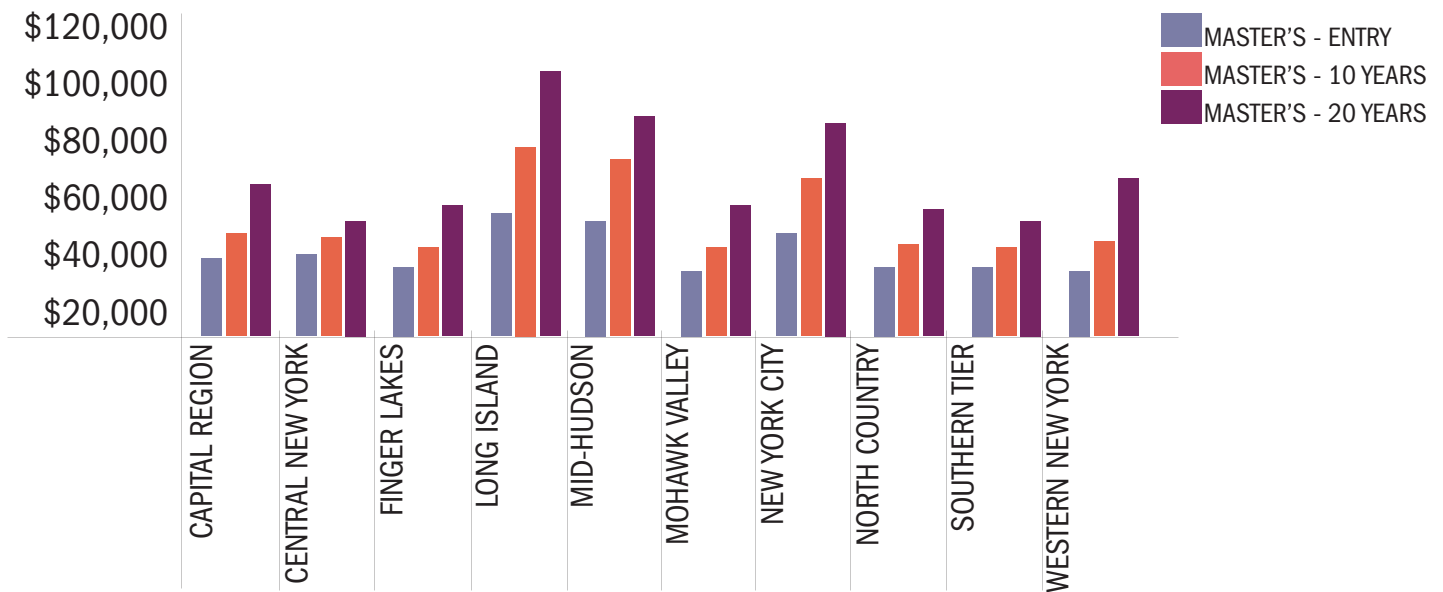


Figure 2



Cornell University
ILR School

Bargaining for Better Schools (BBS) is an initiative of the ILR School at Cornell University through the Scheinman Institute on Conflict Resolution and the Worker Institute. These publications are free for public reproduction with proper accreditation. For more information on BBS, our past publications, and future research, please visit: www.ilr.cornell.edu/bbs.

DigitalCommons at ILR: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/>. SeeThroughNY: <http://seethroughny.net/>.
¹Of 244,260 teachers in NYS, only 5% have only a Bachelor's degree and over 90% have at least a Master's.
 For more information: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pmf/2011-12/2012-Stat-02.pdf>.
²Governor Andrew Cuomo created 10 zones in 2011 to develop strategies for economic growth in their respective zones. For more information about the Economic Development Regional Councils visit: <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>.