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**CONTACT**  
Nicole Gerber  
National Council on Teacher Quality  
[ngerber@nctq.org](mailto:ngerber@nctq.org)  
202-393-0020 ext. 712

## NEW REVIEW OF WHAT TEACHERS EARN REVEALS SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES AMONG SCHOOL DISTRICTS

*A Review of 90 of the Nation's Largest School Districts Finds Most Are Not Using Pay as a Strategic Measure to Attract and Retain High Quality Teachers Where They Are Most Needed*

**Washington, D.C.** — A new analysis by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) examines salary data and related compensation materials from 90 large school districts to determine lifetime earnings trajectories for teachers over a 30-year career. The findings expose large differences in what teachers can earn based on where they work on a number of measures, including starting salaries, salary growth rates, opportunities to earn bonuses, and earnings over a career lifetime.

To compare teacher pay across school districts in the new [Smart Money 2.0](#) report, NCTQ adjusted all salary data by regional cost-of-living. Even with cost-of-living adjustments, the new data affirms previous findings that pay for teachers is markedly low compared to other similar professionals.

There are only 14 districts in the NCTQ analysis where a teacher with a bachelor's degree will reach an annual salary of \$75,000 (or its equivalent in terms of the cost of living) at some point in a 30-year career. While a teacher in **Boston** with a bachelor's degree qualifies for the salary equivalent of \$75,000 after only seven years, such districts are an anomaly. Teachers in most districts (48/90) will never cross that threshold even with a master's degree.

"President Biden was more right than he knew when he recently said that teachers need a raise, not praise," said **NCTQ President Kate Walsh**. "Teacher pay must increase if the profession is going to attract diverse, talented individuals. Particularly when it comes to prospective teachers whose content knowledge is transferable to other industries, such as in STEM, lower salaries relative to other professions can be a major deterrent."

The new data also reveals significant differences when it comes to the amount of money teachers can expect to earn over a 30-year career. A typical teacher with a master's degree in districts such as **Albuquerque** and **Oakland** earns as little as \$1.4 million over a 30-year career (equivalent to slightly less than \$47,000 a year on average) while a typical teacher in **Chicago** with a master's degree can make as much as \$2.6 million throughout their career (or an average of \$87,000 a year).

On the heels of a widespread movement to persuade districts to direct their compensation dollars toward their greatest needs, still only a handful of districts pay substantially higher salaries or bonuses to teachers who are high-performing, work in a hard-to-staff school, or who are qualified to teach a shortage subject area. A teacher with a bachelor's degree in the **District of Columbia Public Schools** who is high-performing and teaches in a hard-to-staff school or subject can qualify for a salary of \$120,000 after only eight years in the classroom. Only **Dallas** offers a similarly high premium, but primarily for its high-performing teachers, who can make an additional nearly \$26,000 a year. Other districts that offer significant differential pay include **Charleston, Albuquerque, Cumberland, Jordan, Davis, Clark, Granite**, and **Austin** (though none are as generous as D.C. or Dallas), but most of the reviewed districts continue to base salaries only on years of experience and attainment of advanced degrees.

Despite there being scant evidence that teachers who have an advanced degree are more effective, many school districts still continue to reward educators for obtaining not just one but up to three advanced degrees.

“As we recover from an unprecedented time of instructional loss due to COVID-19, district and school leaders must prioritize using pay strategically to attract, retain, and reward teachers who can make the most difference for student learning,” concluded **Walsh**.

See all the data including salary growth potential across districts, how teacher salaries stack up against comparable professionals, and lifetime earnings over 30 years by school district in the full report: [\*\*Smart Money 2.0: A 90-district comparison of what teachers make, what it takes to make more, and the missed opportunities to raise pay and improve outcomes.\*\*](#)

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To schedule an interview with NCTQ President Kate Walsh, contact Nicole Gerber at (202) 393-0020 ext. 712 or by email at [ngerber@nctq.org](mailto:ngerber@nctq.org).

***About the National Council on Teacher Quality:*** *NCTQ is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. We recognize that it is not teachers who bear responsibility for their profession's many challenges, but the institutions with the greatest authority and influence over teachers. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, [www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org).*