

## **NEA Study Reveals Teacher Salaries Stagnant for Last Decade**

### *Schools Struggle to Find & Keep Well-Qualified Teachers*

Washington, D.C. –Despite the rise in school enrollments and the chronic teacher shortages faced by many school districts, a state-by-state report (<http://www.nea.org/edstats/index.html>) released today by the National Education Association (NEA) shows teacher salary levels have barely budged, complicating the nation’s efforts to attract and retain qualified teachers.

The report, *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2004 and Estimates of School Statistics 2005*, also demonstrates that other critical investments in U.S. public schools are not keeping pace with the needs of our children.

Research shows that the quality of a child’s teacher is a key factor in closing the achievement gaps that exist today and ensuring that all students are prepared for success in work and life. Yet according to NEA’s study, the average salary of a public school teacher for the 2003-2004 school year increased only slightly over the previous year.

Over the last decade, teacher salaries have remained flat, growing just 2.9 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars. Fifteen states saw real declines in average teacher salaries between the 1993-94 and 2003-04 school years, adjusted for inflation. States with average salaries declining five percent or more are: Alaska (-14.3%), Kansas (-10.4%), Connecticut (-9.4%), Wisconsin (-6.3%) and New York (-5.2%) (Charts C-11, C-14).

Speaking on behalf of NEA’s 2.7 million educators, President Reg Weaver emphasized that inadequate state and local funding of public schools and the strict, costly regulations of the so-called “No Child Left Behind” law are making it more difficult for schools to retain quality employees.

“A career in teaching offers many intrinsic rewards. But teachers should never have to choose between doing what they love and supporting their families,” Weaver said. “We can’t continue to ask them to fulfill such an important mission without providing the support they deserve and need to remain in the profession.”

Nationwide, at least 2 million teachers will be needed over the next decade because of teacher attrition and retirement and increased student enrollment. Research shows that more than one third of all new teachers leave the profession within three years and almost one half leave within five years due to poor working conditions and low salaries. The percentages are even higher for minority teachers, male teachers, and teachers under 30.

“Every child should be able to attend a great public school and have what he or she needs to succeed – highly qualified teachers, small class sizes, and up-to-date textbooks and materials,” Weaver added. “It’s time for policymakers at all levels to step up and provide the resources.”

Other highlights of the annual report include:

- Average per student spending for the 2003-04 school year rose 2.3 percent to \$8,248 – with 29 states below the average. The highest-ranking states were the District of Columbia, New York and Connecticut. The lowest were Utah, Arizona and Oklahoma (Charts H-9, H-11, H-16).
- Public school enrollment for Fall 2003 rose 0.7 percent to 48,132,518 students. The fastest-growing student populations were in Nevada, Arizona and Florida. The largest decreases occurred in the District of Columbia, North Dakota, Wyoming and Vermont (Charts B-2, B-3).

Using information provided by state education agencies and analyzed by NEA researchers, *Rankings and Estimates* has presented selected education statistics since the 1960s.

The complete report can be found at <http://www.nea.org/edstats/index.html>.

The selected tables mentioned above can be found at:  
<http://www.nea.org/newsreleases/2005/nr050623a.html>.