

## REPORT

# Teacher Salary and Benefits in North Carolina

Curious about teaching, but wondering what your finances will look like? We've created this salary and benefits report so you'll know what to expect.

In this report, you'll find information on:

 Teacher salaries

 Benefits

 Cost of living

 Job security

 Career growth

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# How much do teachers in North Carolina earn?

In North Carolina, teachers earn a base salary that's set by the state. Most counties offer an additional amount on top of the state salary. That means the amount you'll make will depend on the county where you teach, as well as your experience and the type of teaching license you have.

What does that mean in concrete numbers? In this section, we'll share example salaries from around the state.

## Starting salary

The starting salary is what you'll make in your very first year as a teacher, right out of your teaching program. Salary supplements vary from county to county, but are still comparable around North Carolina. In 2020, North Carolina's average teacher total starting salary was \$37,049. (2)

Check out these salaries for beginning teachers around the state:



To see more salaries around the state, check out the district profiles at our Schools & Community page. Visit: [northcarolina.teach.org/schools-community](https://northcarolina.teach.org/schools-community).

### STATE SALARY FOR FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

City (District)	\$ from the state	\$ from the county	Total salary
Asheville <a href="#">Buncombe County Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$2,975	\$37,975
Charlotte <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$6,276	\$41,276
Fayetteville <a href="#">Cumberland County Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$2,618	\$37,618
Greensboro <a href="#">Guilford County Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$5,000	\$40,000
Greenville <a href="#">Pitt County Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$2,100	\$37,100
Raleigh <a href="#">Wake County Public School System</a>	\$35,000	\$6,275	\$41,275
Wilmington <a href="#">New Hanover County Schools</a>	\$35,000	\$7,000	\$42,000

## STATE SALARY FOR FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE

City (District)	\$ from the state	\$ from the county	Total salary
Asheville <a href="#">Buncombe County Schools</a>	\$38,500	\$3,584	\$41,772
Charlotte <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</a>	\$38,500	\$7,098	\$45,598
Fayetteville <a href="#">Cumberland County Schools</a>	\$38,500	\$2,880	\$41,380
Greensboro <a href="#">Guilford County Schools</a>	\$38,500	\$5,440	\$43,940
Greenville ( <a href="#">Pitt County Schools</a> )	\$38,500	\$2,310	\$40,810
Raleigh <a href="#">Wake County Public School System</a>	\$38,500	\$7,388	\$45,888
Wilmington <a href="#">New Hanover County Schools</a>	\$38,500	\$7,000	\$45,500

## Average salary

Average salary refers to what all teachers make, on average—so that includes people who have advanced degrees and have been in the job for years.

**In the 2020-2021 school year, the average salary for North Carolina teachers was \$54,392. (3)**

The chart below shows salaries for North Carolina teachers with a master's degree and 10 years of experience. These salaries do not include extra certifications, incentives or after-school positions like coaching, all of which can increase your pay. And remember, these salaries will be even higher by the time you reach this stage in your career!

## STATE SALARY FOR TEACHERS WITH 10 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND A MASTER'S DEGREE

City (District)	State salary	Salary supplement	Total salary
Asheville <a href="#">Buncombe County Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$4,301	\$54,901
Charlotte <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$8,505	\$59,105
Fayetteville <a href="#">Cumberland County Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$3,347	\$53,947
Greensboro <a href="#">Guilford County Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$4,490	\$55,090
Greenville <a href="#">Pitt County Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$3,036	\$53,636
Raleigh <a href="#">Wake County Public School System</a>	\$50,600	\$8,816	\$59,416
Wilmington <a href="#">New Hanover County Schools</a>	\$50,600	\$8,500	\$59,100



## Increasing your salary

There are a number of ways you can increase your salary as a teacher. Advanced degrees, such as a master's, are one way to bump up your pay.

You can also earn more by leading certain extracurriculars, like yearbook, choir or sports teams. Pay for these roles can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the activity and your school.

### Example

Say you're a high school math teacher in New Hanover County in Wilmington, and you're interested in coaching soccer. Your pay could add up like this (4):

<b>\$35K</b>	State salary
<b>13K</b>	Master's degree/ eight-years' experience
<b>2.5K</b>	County supplement
<b>2K</b>	Hard-to-fill subject area bonus
<b>+ 1.5K</b>	JV soccer coach

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**\$59,000** Total Salary

Many schools offer incentives for meeting certain performance or leadership benchmarks, or for getting your National Board Certification. National Board Certified teachers earn a 12% pay increase from the state, and your school may provide an additional National Board Certification bonus as well. (5)

You can also earn a higher starting salary if you teach in a shortage area, such as math or exceptional children (also called special education):

- + \$1,000** per year in Greensboro (Guilford County) teaching exceptional children (6)
- + \$3,500** bonus in Raleigh (Wake County) teaching special education (7)
- + \$2,000** per year in Wilmington (New Hanover County) teaching any hard-to-fill area (4)

# Can I have a comfortable life as a teacher?

The short answer to this question is yes!

The longer answer is yes, and it's also smart to compare costs of living in different towns and cities. You might earn a lower dollar amount in a small town than you would in a metro area—but remember, your cost of living will probably be lower too.

Plus, teacher salaries are on the rise in North Carolina. In the next two years, North Carolina teachers are slated to get average pay increases of 5.5%, and state employees making less than \$75,000 will receive an additional \$1,000 bonus. (8)

Extra financial supports, like loan forgiveness and housing assistance programs, can also make many cities more affordable.

## How does teaching compare to other professions in North Carolina?

On average, teacher pay in North Carolina is comparable to other popular fields. Teachers usually work 180-190 days each year—compared to 260 work days a year in most other professions. Take a look at this chart to compare average salaries across the state (9).

Industry	Job	Days of work per year	Average salary
Education	Teacher	185	\$54K ←
Business and Finance	Tax Preparer	260	\$24K
Social Services	Community Health Worker	260	\$39K
Business and Finance	Tax Preparer	260	\$56K
Law	Paralegal or Legal Assistant	260	\$47K
Art and Design	Graphic Designer	260	\$50K
Healthcare	Registered Nurse	260	\$67K
Technology	Web Developer	260	\$70K



# Benefits

Most teachers in North Carolina enjoy excellent benefits. In this section, we'll break down what that can look like.

## Health

As a North Carolina teacher, you'll most likely enroll in the North Carolina State Health Plan, which covers medical insurance costs for public school teachers and state employees. (10)

Your local school system may provide additional dental, vision, disability and other insurance. Check with your local education agency for details on your specific options.

## Retirement

In North Carolina, you'll receive retirement funds through the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS). The longer you've worked in the school system, the more you'll receive in retirement. You can retire with unreduced benefits if you:

- Are 65 and have contributed to TSERS for five years.
- Are 60 and have put in 25 years of teaching service.
- Have completed 30 years of teaching service at any age. (11)

## Vacation

You're probably aware that teachers get a long summer break. You can use this time for professional development, to relax, to work elsewhere or whatever else you like. Some schools offer summer positions for teachers, such as summer school classes or curriculum development jobs.

Other vacation days will vary by region, but during the school year, you'll usually get the same vacation days as your students.



You can expect:

- Spring break
- December holiday break
- National holidays off
- Paid personal & sick days during the school year

## Professional development

You can increase your knowledge and your pay through additional classes after you become a teacher. Many schools offer tuition reimbursement and paid professional development leave for teachers.

Tuition reimbursement can make your education cheaper, and it helps schools retain top-notch educators. Your school may also cover leave and expenses for you to pursue professional development such as conferences or trainings.

## Loan forgiveness

Public school teachers can get thousands of dollars in financial support, including student loan forgiveness. That means that if you meet certain criteria, you won't need to pay back the rest of your loans.

Below, we'll go over a few loan forgiveness programs.

## Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program

The Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program benefits public school teachers with federal student loans. To qualify, you'll need to:

- Teach in a school that serves low-income students.
- Teach full-time for five consecutive academic years.
- Have taken out your loans before the end of your five years of service.

Math, science and special education teachers can receive up to \$17,500 in loan forgiveness. If you teach a different subject, you can still get up to \$5,000 in forgiven loans.

To learn more, visit [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher).

## Perkins Loan Forgiveness

You can get up to 100% of your Perkins loans forgiven if you teach a hard-to-fill subject in a school that serves low-income students. These subjects include:

- Math
- Science
- Exceptional children

To learn more, visit [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/perkins](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/perkins).

## Public Service Loan Forgiveness

If you work in public service—meaning government or nonprofits—you may qualify to have your student loans forgiven. To get this benefit, you'll need to:

- Work full-time in a public service field for 10 years. This includes teaching!
- Make 10 consecutive years of student loan payments during that time.

To learn more, visit [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service).



## Housing assistance

Housing is expensive, and affording a house can be a major concern. Fortunately, North Carolina teachers have options to cover the cost of buying a home.

### Good Neighbor Next Door

Good Neighbor Next Door is a program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program offers public service professionals, including teachers, 50% off the list price of a home in a revitalization area. In exchange, you'll commit to living in the home for at least 36 months.

To learn more about Good Neighbor Next Door, visit [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot).

### Teacher Next Door Program

The Teacher Next Door Program is designed to help classroom teachers buy a home in North Carolina and become homeowners in the communities where they work. The program offers a wide range of support for educators, including:

- Housing grants
- Down payment assistance
- Home loans
- Preferred interest rates

To learn more about the Teacher Next Door Program, visit <https://www.teachernextdoor.us/Teachers>.

# How much job security will I have as a teacher?



Now is a great time to become a teacher. Teachers are in high demand across North Carolina, and the number of teaching opportunities is projected to grow in the coming years. (12)

You'll have extra job security if you get licensed in a hard-to-fill subject area. In North Carolina, hard-to-fill areas include:

- Early childhood
- Elementary school
- Exceptional children
- STEM
- English as a Second Language
- World languages

# Can I grow in my career as a teacher?

One of the great benefits of teaching is that it opens the door to many other career paths. As an educator, your path might lead into any number of fields, including classroom leadership, school leadership, education policy or educational products that help teachers.

Let's get a little more specific about what career growth can mean. If your heart is in the classroom, you can teach and grow into specialized leadership roles. You could become a teacher leader who offers instructional support and feedback to colleagues. Or as a mentor teacher, you could help student teachers and early career educators develop their teaching chops and strategies.

Classroom leadership roles also come with extra pay. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools,

teacher leaders can increase their pay by \$2,000 to \$18,000, depending on their level of extra responsibility. (13) In Wilmington (New Hanover County), mentor teachers supporting early career educators receive an additional \$100 per month (14), and mentor coordinators in Raleigh (Wake County) earn an additional \$500 stipend. (15)

Interested in life outside the classroom? The table below shows salaries for school leadership positions across North Carolina. These salaries are samples, to give you a sense of the types of jobs and pay available in school leadership. You can click on the links for each district to see salaries for additional administrative positions.





City (District)	Positions and Salaries
<b>Charlotte, 12-month contract</b> <a href="#">Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary school assistant principal: \$49,962-\$82,431</li> <li>Middle school principal: \$73,736-\$95,742</li> </ul>
<b>Greensboro, 10 month contract</b> <a href="#">Guilford County Schools</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle school assistant principal with a master's degree: \$50,880-\$71,110</li> <li>Middle school assistant principal with a doctorate: \$53,410-\$73,640</li> </ul>
<b>Raleigh, 11-month contract</b> <a href="#">Wake County Public Schools</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High school assistant principal, non-magnet program: \$55,714-\$84,415</li> <li>High school assistant principal, magnet program: \$56,624-\$85,749</li> </ul>
<b>Wilmington, 12 month contract</b> <a href="#">New Hanover County Schools</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary school principal: \$42,450-\$65,460</li> <li>High school principal: \$83,125-\$114,556</li> </ul>



To learn more about career growth possibilities, visit <https://www.teach.org/explore/career-paths>.

**This report is meant as a general overview or starting point—but there’s a lot more info where this came from! A TeachNC coach can answer all your questions about what it’s like to be a teacher in North Carolina. Visit [northcarolina.teach.org/services/coaching](https://www.northcarolina.teach.org/services/coaching) to set up a free session.**

# References

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