



Table 8. State rankings, percentage by which average teacher's salary exceeded average worker's salary, 2002.

This table is not a measure of the comparative worth of teaching against any other profession, but rather an examination of the relationship between the wages of public employees and the people whose taxes pay those wages. While both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers release teacher salary rankings each year, they acknowledge that these rankings do not account for the difference in the cost-of-living between one region of the United States and another. Rather than try to generate my own cost-of-living measure, as union researchers have done, I thought it much more correct to compare teachers against everyone else in that state. Surely workers in Nevada experience the same inflation rate as teachers in Nevada do.

In Table 8, I make no judgment about what the difference between teacher salaries and worker salaries ought to be (the United States as a whole paid its public school teachers 27.0 percent more than its average workers earned). But without the average worker and his colleagues who work at the factory, the bank, the hospital, city hall, the newspaper, etc., there can be no public school teacher salaries. Workers who earn \$50,000 per year are much more able to support a teacher who earns \$50,000 per year than are workers who earn only \$20,000 per year. The District of Columbia makes the point clear.

In 2002, DC public school teachers ranked 10th in average teacher salary. This would suggest that they are highly paid. But Table 8 shows that the average DC public school teacher actually made less money than the average DC worker (*Note: NEA's estimate for DC in 2003-04 showed a 12.3% increase in the average teacher salary*). In Texas, teachers only made 10.3 percent more than the average Texas worker. These findings would suggest that the economies in the district and the state could easily manage a pay increase for teachers. Conversely, it will take a mighty effort to persuade taxpayers in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Idaho that they need to pony up additional funds for teachers who already make much more than they do.



Table 8. State rankings, percentage by which average teacher's salary exceeded average worker's salary, 2002 (Derived from Table 1 – National Education Association Rankings & Estimates, Fall 2004 Update, released November 30, 2004, and Table 1 – Average annual wages for 2001 and 2002 for all covered workers by state, Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/state2002.pdf>)

U.S. 24.6%					
1)	Rhode Island	46.7	27)	Kentucky	26.136
2)	Pennsylvania	43.6	28)	New Mexico	25.6
3)	Idaho	42.6	29)	Utah	25.1
4)	Oregon	41.3	30)	Florida	24.2
5)	Michigan	40.5	31)	Louisiana	23.4
6)	Indiana	37.9	32)	South Dakota	22.97
7)	Montana	37.5	33)	Nevada	22.95
8)	Hawaii	36.1	34)	Delaware	22.9
9)	Arkansas	36.0	35)	Kansas	22.6
10)	California	35.9	36)	Oklahoma	21.7
11)	South Carolina	34.53	37)	Tennessee	20.5
12)	West Virginia	34.49	38)	Arizona	20.1
13)	Wyoming	34.0	39)	New Jersey	19.9
14)	Alaska	33.8	40)	Minnesota	19.5
15)	Vermont	33.7	41)	Connecticut	18.2
16)	Ohio	33.0	42)	Washington	17.6
17)	Wisconsin	31.8	43)	New Hampshire	15.8
18)	Iowa	31.7	44)	Massachusetts	15.2
19)	North Carolina	29.74	45)	New York	14.4
20)	Illinois	29.70	46)	Virginia	14.0
21)	Mississippi	29.6	47)	Missouri	13.7
22)	Maine	29.5	48)	Alabama	12.8
23)	Nebraska	28.7	49)	Colorado	12.3
24)	North Dakota	27.6	50)	Texas	10.3
25)	Georgia	27.4	51)	District of Columbia	-14.1
26)	Maryland	26.141			