

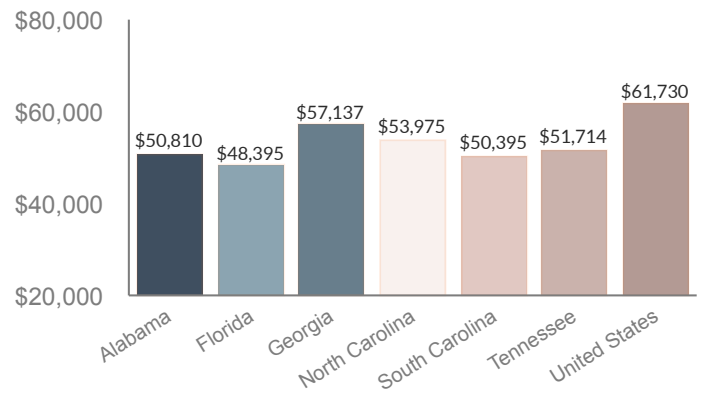
# EDUCATOR PAY IN GEORGIA

## Peer Comparison

The National Education Association (NEA) annually publishes the average teacher salary for all states. When compared to neighboring states in the South, Georgia has the highest average teacher salary. According to the John Locke Foundation, Georgia's national ranking moves from 23rd to 8th when adjusted for inflation.

The 2019 estimate for Georgia does not take into consideration the \$3,000 pay raise that goes into effect during the 2019-2020 school year, but does include supplements offered by local school systems.

Average Educator Salary

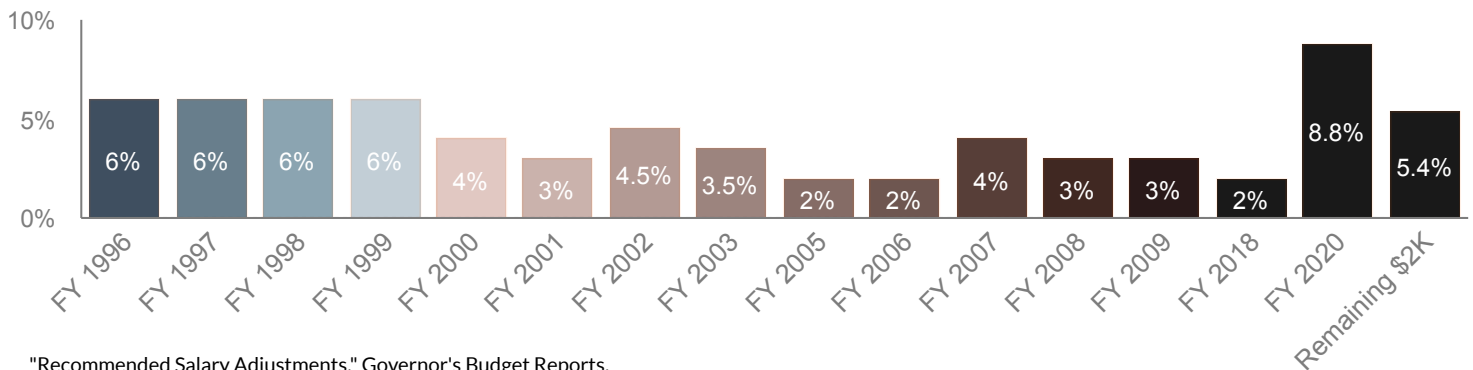


"Rankings of the States 2018 and Estimates of School Statistics 2019," National Education Association (NEA).

## Cost of a Payraise

In FY 2020, Georgia passed the largest increase to the base salary schedule in the state's history. The \$3,000 pay raise, equal to 8.8% of the base salary, was funded for certified teachers and certified employees. In the past, step increases were determined as a percent increase; however, the FY 2020 pay raise added \$3,000 to every step on the schedule, giving each state-funded educator a \$3,000 increase. The current cost of implementing the remaining \$2,000 pay raise promised by Governor Kemp is \$350 million. Below is a history of educator base pay raises, for the years they were given, since 1996.

Educator Base Pay Raise History



"Recommended Salary Adjustments," Governor's Budget Reports.

\*While no pay raise was given in FY 2015, FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2019, \$1.06 billion of austerity was restored during those years to eliminate furlough days, increase instructional days, and provide salary increases to teachers.

## Accountability/Flexibility Factor

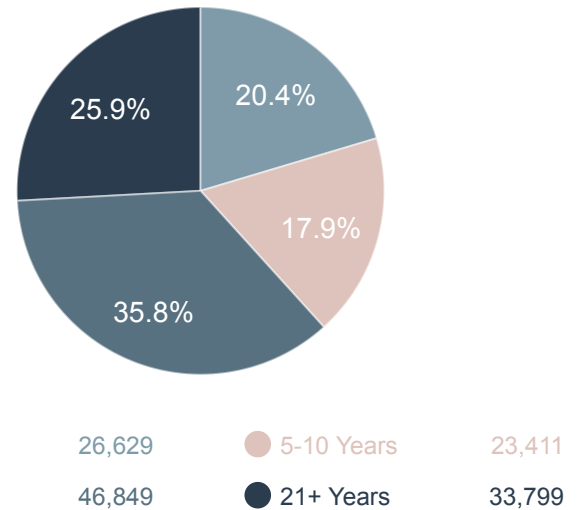
During the recession, school systems petitioned the legislature for flexibility in QBE controls such as class size and the salary schedule to help them manage austerity reductions, which totaled \$1.14 billion at the time. As the economy grew, systems asked

the General Assembly to make the flexibility permanent in exchange for increased accountability. In 2015, HB 502 was passed providing school systems the option of becoming a charter system or strategic waiver system and giving them broad flexibility from Title 20 in exchange for increased accountability. Flexibility and accountability contracts between the State Board of Education and school systems are typically five years, and the renewal of those contracts depends on accountability benchmarks achieved. As a charter system or strategic waiver system, most school systems have waivers from the state salary schedule requirement, giving them flexibility to create their own compensation structure. This helps to explain why teachers in some school systems did not receive the full \$3,000 pay raise budgeted in FY 2020. However, as of FY 2018, 156 school systems in Georgia, or 86%, continue to follow the state salary schedule.

## Salary Schedule

The Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula uses the base salary of an educator, \$37,092 for FY 2020, to determine earnings related to enrollment, then overlays training and experience (T&E). In Georgia, the base salary assumes a bachelor's degree and no years of experience. Training and experience is determined by the state salary schedule (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-220), which is set by the State Board of Education and places value on an educator's degree (training) and years of experience. Actual information on years of experience and certificate level, called Certified Personnel Information (CPI), is sent to the Department of Education by local school systems annually to determine the amount of funds local systems will earn through QBE for their educators.

**Educator Experience**



At the beginning of an educator's career, step increases are earned annually, typically between 2% to 3%. The timing of step increases diminishes as educators progress in their career with no step increases occurring after 21 years of service. The above chart shows 80% of Georgia educators have more than five years of experience, with 26% having over 21 years of experience. To add one additional step to the schedule for the most experienced educators, it would cost approximately \$60 million.

The state salary schedule is used for both certified teachers and certified employees, such as school counselors, psychologists, and social workers, because they are all certified by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC). Certified employees are considered educators and spend the majority of their time interacting with students; also, they must apply to receive a professional certificate from PSC, which often requires a master's degree or education specialist degree.

Lastly, many school systems provide additional salary supplements to their educators. Supplements are determined at the local level by the local board of education. In Georgia, local salary supplements can vary greatly by school system, with some systems offering an additional percentage or dollar amount; some creating their own salary schedule; and some (often poor and rural systems) offering no local supplements.

## The Local Impact

The QBE formula provides school systems with funds for educators based on the number of students enrolled and class funding size ratios (O.C.G.A. 20-2-182). However, this does not constitute all educators in Georgia. Local school systems employ a number of educators above what is funded in QBE through local or federal funds. For example, this could include additional teachers in art, music and physical education. When a state-funded educator pay raise is provided through QBE, most school systems honor that pay raise for all their educators; but this requires the system to use local funds to provide that same pay raise to their locally-funded educators. This is another reason why teachers in some systems did not receive the full \$3,000 pay raise budgeted in FY 2020.