



# AMERICA'S TEACHERS DESERVE A RAISE

## Valuing and Respecting Working People Who Lay the Foundation of Our Future Economy

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Every child deserves a world-class education, regardless of their ZIP code. Of all in-school factors that impact their success, there's nothing more important than our teachers. That's a fact. But we're not acting like it. In America today, there's a drastic teacher pay gap—and it's growing. Public school teachers earn [11 percent](#) less than similar professionals, teachers are [more likely](#) than non-teachers to work a second job, and the average teacher makes [\\$1,000](#) less than 30 years ago.

The teacher pay gap is a national failure that's holding America back. From city schools in major urban centers, to rural schools like those in South Carolina's "Corridor of Shame," we've failed to give teachers the respect and resources they deserve. It's time for a bold, national response.

So let's speak the truth: America's teachers are drastically underpaid and they deserve a raise. That's exactly what Kamala Harris intends to give them as President. **We'll make the largest investment in teachers in American history and provide the average teacher a \$13,500 raise, entirely closing the teacher pay gap.**

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## HERE'S HOW WE'LL DO IT

**States will receive the largest federal investment in teacher pay in history—enough to increase pay for nearly every teacher in America and entirely close the teacher pay gap.**

- Under our plan, the average teacher in America will receive a \$13,500 raise, the equivalent of a 23 percent increase in base pay.
- The Department of Education will work with state education agencies to set a base salary goal for beginning teachers in every state. The goal will account for the average salary earned by similarly educated professionals in the state starting out their careers. It will also increase based on years in the classroom and advanced qualifications to keep up with higher wages earned by similarly experienced professionals. Under our plan, states and school districts will increase every teacher's salary until, at a minimum, they meet the goal.
- States, districts, and schools will be required to use funds to increase base teacher pay, not replace existing education funding.
- Funding will allow states to fully close the 11 percent total compensation gap that accounts for benefits and the [larger gap](#) that exists when just comparing wages.

**We'll provide a base level of funding to every state in the country, and then incentivize states do their part to take full advantage of our plan.**

- Under our plan, the federal government will immediately invest in public schools to provide the first 10 percent of funding needed to close the teacher pay gap in every state.
- Then we'll incentivize states to step up and do their part: For every \$1 a state contributes to increasing pay, the federal government will invest \$3 until the teacher pay gap is entirely closed by the end of Harris' first term.
- To receive funding, states will be required to maintain their share of the investment over time, including by increasing pay to cover their share of wage inflation.

**America’s highest-need public schools, which disproportionately serve students of color, will receive funding to increase teacher pay even further.**

- Under our plan, every public school in America will be able to pay their teachers as much as other comparable professionals in their state. But tackling decades of inequality requires we go further. Our plan makes an additional targeted investment, beyond just closing the gap, to pay teachers in America’s highest-need schools more than other comparable professionals in their state. In allocating the investment, we’ll take into account the extent to which these schools face high rates of funding inequality.
- Our plan will help these high-need schools reduce teacher turnover, attract talented young graduates and experienced educators, and improve teaching and learning conditions for our kids.
- Students and teachers of color disproportionately learn and work in these schools. For example, nearly [45 percent](#) of Black and Latinx students in America attend public schools that will receive this additional investment.

**We’ll support programs dedicated to teacher recruitment, training, and professional development—particularly at HBCUs.**

- Our plan will include a multi-billion dollar investment in programs that help elevate the teaching profession and support principals and other school leaders. This [includes](#) high-quality teacher and principal residencies, early-career induction programs that pair new teachers with mentors and master teachers, career ladder models that allow for advancement opportunities for teacher leaders, and [“Grow Your Own”](#) programs that help increase teacher diversity.
- Half of this funding will be dedicated to high-quality programs at HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in our education system. We need to change that. [Nearly 40 percent](#) of all Black teachers and 50 percent of all Hispanic teachers graduate

from MSIs. We'll help them bring the next generation of high-achieving college students of color into the profession.

**We'll support the right of public educators to join and engage with their union, and bring the fight for student needs and better pay to cities and state capitals across America.**

- From West Virginia to Oklahoma to California, Americans are standing up in solidarity for dignity and equity in our classrooms. We need to strengthen the hand of our teachers to continue the fight for the resources their students need and the respect they deserve.
- That's why we will fight for every education professional to have the ability to join a union and bargain collectively.

We estimate this plan's cost to the federal government will be in the range of \$315 billion over ten years. It will be paid for by strengthening the estate tax and cracking down on loopholes that let the very wealthiest, with estates worth multiple millions or billions of dollars, avoid paying their fair share.

This plan is about more than just salary. It's about making an investment that will yield big returns for our country. It's about valuing and respecting the working people who lay the foundation of our future economy. It's about guaranteeing the opportunity for every child to succeed.

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## **HERE'S WHAT RAISING TEACHER PAY CAN DO**

***Dramatically reduce teacher turnover and its harmful impact on students and schools.*** Nearly [one of every five](#) teachers in America leaves the profession within five years of entering the classroom, and attrition from the teaching workforce as a whole rose by [41 percent](#) from 1989 to 2009. Turnover is [50 percent](#) higher for teachers in

low-income schools and [70 percent](#) higher for teachers in schools serving the most students of color. That turnover harms [student achievement](#), [school-wide outcomes](#), and even [district budgets](#). In South Korea, where teacher salaries and student achievement outpace the U.S., the rate of teacher turnover is [one percent](#). It's time for America to catch up. By raising teacher pay we can [retain](#) and support our teachers, and improve outcomes for our students.

***Attract more of America's brightest young people into a profession that's charting a path for the future of our kids.*** Pay erosion and the marginalization of the education profession is having a drastic impact in our schools. The number of college freshmen that plan to major in education is near its [lowest](#) point in 45 years. As the number of young people who opt into the profession [declines](#), cities and communities struggle to attract new teachers. This is especially true in rural schools, which are more likely to [report](#) difficulty in filling vacancies, particularly in STEM positions. The [research](#) is [clear](#): If we want more young people to aspire to enter the profession, we should increase teacher pay.

***Narrow race and gender pay disparities to lift up women and teachers of color.*** Even controlling for degrees and experience, Black teachers, on average, earn [\\$2,700](#) less per year than white teachers, and women earn \$2,000 less than men. For Black Americans, these gaps are compounded by [higher](#) student debt loads, creating an even greater [barrier](#) to entering and staying in a profession that fails to offer competitive pay. These trends don't just hurt teachers, they disproportionately harm Black and Latinx students. Lower pay is one reason teachers of color are [not proportionally](#) represented in the profession, a devastating reality [given](#) they boost math and reading achievement, graduation rates, and college aspirations for students of color. If we're intentional in how we increase teacher pay, we can attack these disparities and strengthen families and communities that have been neglected for far too long.

***Lay a foundation of economic opportunity to tackle inequality, particularly for Black and Latinx students.*** America's public schools are [more](#) segregated today than when *Brown v. Board* was decided over 60 years ago—and teacher segregation is even [worse](#). With that segregation comes educational neglect. America's highest-need districts [receive](#) less state and local funding than wealthy districts, and for districts

serving mostly students of color, the gap is even worse. Resource inequality drives the race-based achievement gap, which robs students of the equivalent of [1.5](#) years of academic progress. In part, this inequality plays out in the form of teacher pay: The average teacher salary in America's highest-poverty schools is roughly [\\$4,000](#) less than in our lowest-poverty schools. If we want to tackle rising inequality and [improve outcomes for](#) all of our kids, we must invest in our teachers and public schools.

***Prepare America for the future by strengthening our economy at home and improving our competitiveness abroad.*** Greater educational attainment is correlated with higher wages across [states](#) and stronger economic growth across [countries](#). Yet today, American students rank [behind](#) their peers in other countries, particularly in science and math. Raising teacher pay and investing in public education can [improve](#) student performance, [reduce](#) dropout rates, [increase](#) earnings for students later in life, and [reduce](#) the risk of adult poverty. Yet, the U.S. has the [largest](#) teacher pay gap of any developed country in the world. If we invest in our teachers and close achievement gaps between the U.S. and higher-performing countries, we could [raise](#) lifetime earnings for our students and add up to [\\$2.3 trillion](#) to the economy.

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This plan is about elevating and respecting the teaching profession, confronting inequality, leveling the playing field for our kids, and building an economy that works for all. Because across America, too many working people are overlooked and underpaid. From childcare workers and home health aides to nurses and school support professionals, America's fastest-growing occupations don't have good enough pay and economic rights. Raising teacher pay is one pillar in a strategy to bring working people who are the backbone of our economy out of the margins and into the center of the conversation about economic justice.