



A Union of Professionals

## AFT News Release

**For Immediate Release**

March 29, 2007

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### **AFT SALARY SURVEY: TEACHERS NEED 30 PERCENT RAISE Teacher Pay Insufficient To Meet Rising Debt, Housing Costs in Many Areas**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Anemic growth in teacher salaries is making it increasingly difficult for teachers, especially new ones, to find affordable housing in their communities and to pay off student loan debts, according to the latest teacher salary survey released today by the American Federation of Teachers.

These and other factors place the teaching profession—already plagued by high turnover and recruiting challenges—in further peril. The AFT report asserts that, to make teacher pay competitive with pay in other professions by the end of the decade, teachers need a 30 percent raise—an additional investment in our children’s future of almost \$15 billion per year.

“Given the difficulty many districts have attracting and keeping educators, the financial penalty for deciding to become a teacher is unacceptable,” said AFT President Edward J. McElroy. “If we’re serious about placing the most qualified professionals in the classroom and keeping them there, we simply need to make a significant investment in teacher salaries.”

The AFT teacher salary survey for the 2004-05 school year found that the average teacher salary was \$47,602, a 2.2 percent increase from the previous year. This falls short of the rate of inflation for that year, which was 3.4 percent. Between 2003 and 2005, the buying power of the average teacher salary decreased by almost \$800. The 2005 report uses the most complete data available, but a look at more recent data from the 50 largest U.S. cities indicates the salary situation is not improving.

The 2005 salary survey also examines the impact of rising housing costs and student loan debt on teachers in the 50 largest cities. The study concludes that the incomes of mid-career teachers in these cities will limit them to purchasing lower-priced homes. In cities such as Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Francisco, many career teachers will be unable to realize the middle-class dream of home ownership.

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American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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“It’s become fashionable in some circles to portray teaching as a lucrative career choice,” said McElroy. “But research shows that this is clearly not the case. It’s going to become increasingly difficult to retain teachers if we’re not even paying them enough to live near the schools where they work.”

Teachers continue to lose ground when their pay is compared with the pay of the American workforce as a whole. For the first time since 1982, teacher salaries are less than the average earnings of government workers, making them among the lower-paid public employees. When adjusted for inflation, real teacher pay is decreasing as private sector salaries are on the rise.

Other highlights of the 2005 salary survey:

- Connecticut had the highest average teacher salary, at \$57,760, while South Dakota posted the lowest, at \$34,039.
- The average beginning teacher salary in the 2004-05 school year was \$31,753, up 3.1 percent from the previous year.
- In 37 states, teacher salaries did not keep pace with the 3.4 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index.

“It’s fine to have discussions and hear proposals to improve education by raising the level of accountability for teachers. But these ideas are destined to fail if the basic pay inequities between teachers and other professions are not remedied,” McElroy said.

The *Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2005* uses data from state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Defense, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The full report, including state-by-state teacher salary information, can be downloaded from the AFT Web site: [www.aft.org/salary/2005/download/AFT2005SalarySurvey.pdf](http://www.aft.org/salary/2005/download/AFT2005SalarySurvey.pdf).

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The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.