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Report analyzes Texas teacher salaries by region

[December 31](#) — The Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently reported results from a legislatively mandated study on teacher pay in Texas. According to the [Professional Employee Salary Report](#), published by TEA in November, data submitted for the study indicated that Texas public school teachers, on average, receive lower annual salaries than certain non-education professionals in fields with similar entry requirements of a bachelor's degree and some form of licensing or certification. Earnings comparisons did not include benefits and pension plans, and differences were found to be greater in some regions of the state than others, with teacher salaries ranging from 1 percent higher to 58 percent lower. The report also concludes that teachers generally receive modest, consistent salary increases over their careers.

[HB 2012](#) by Villarreal, enacted in 2013, required TEA to conduct a cost-of-living salary comparability analysis in each region of the state to determine how teacher salaries compare to those in similar professions outside of education. During the hearing on the bill by the House Public Education Committee, the bill's author said that the information could help prepare lawmakers to consider school finance legislation. TEA cautioned that the analyses in the recently released report should be viewed as preliminary.

The salary report relied on information reported by school districts and charter schools on salaries of teachers with zero to 25 years of classroom experience in the 2012-13 school year. The study reports that the average starting salary for teachers in Texas was \$35,636 and the average for those with 25 years of experience was \$54,015. This represents an average annual increase of \$735, or 2 percent of the average starting salary.

When comparing teacher salaries to those of other professions in various Education Service Center (ESC) [regions](#) of the state, the report found that annual teacher salaries ranged from 1 percent higher in the Edinburg area (ESC Region 1) to 58 percent lower in the Beaumont area (ESC Region 5).

At the direction of the Legislature, TEA also conducted a cost-of-living salary comparability analysis in each region using the 2011-12 Comparable Wage Index (CWI), which measures regional variations in salaries of college graduates who are not educators. The report says data showed that teachers in San Antonio-area districts (ESC Region 20) had both the highest average salary and the highest CWI-adjusted salaries. Teachers in Houston-area districts (ESC Region 4) had the lowest CWI-adjusted salary, although their average salaries are near the middle for the state. According to the report, this may be because non-educational professionals in the Houston area are better paid than their peers in other parts of Texas.

If lawmakers consider proposals to update the Cost of Education Index (CEI) during the upcoming regular session, information on teacher salaries could feature in the debate. The CEI, last updated in 1991, adjusts education funding for districts to account for varying economic conditions in different regions. It modifies school districts' per-student basic allotment based on factors that include teacher salaries in neighboring districts, district size, and the percentage of low-income students in 1989-90, according to TEA. Several bills addressing the CEI have been pre-filed for the upcoming session.

— by Janet Elliott