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Teacher Salaries in the Mountain West, 2019 - 2021

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TEACHER SALARIES IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST, 2019 - 2021

K-12 Education Fact Sheet No. 7 | November 2022

Prepared by: Corryn Richardson, Joshua Padilla, Hira Ahmed, Zachary Billot, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines state-level data of teacher salary benchmarks from the National Education Association, a labor union representing public school teachers and other education faculty in the U.S.¹ Data are presented on average teacher salaries, average teacher starting salaries, and teacher pay penalties in the Mountain West (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah).

ABOUT THE DATA:

The original report from the National Education Association includes data on the average teacher salary with their pay penalty, average starting teacher salary, minimum living wage, per student spending, average earnings, average higher education faculty salary, and rank of each category for each U.S. state from 2019 to 2021. The rankings include each U.S. state and the District of Columbia.

A pay penalty is a measure of how much “teachers are paid less compared to their nonteacher college-educated counterparts.”² If the pay penalty is listed at 20%, teachers earn on average 80 cents on the dollar compared to similar college-educated workers.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Nevada lost the largest number of teachers (1,432) in the Mountain West from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021.
2. Colorado is the only Mountain West state to offer a teacher starting salary below \$40,000 annually from 2020-2021.
3. While Colorado has the lowest teacher starting salary among Mountain West states (about \$35,000 annually), it also has the highest average teacher salary among Mountain West states from 2020-2021 (about \$58,000).
4. Average teacher salaries in the Mountain West do not exceed \$60,000 annually, whereas the U.S. average for the 2020-2021 school year is \$65,293.
5. All Mountain West states have teacher pay penalties that exceed 20%. Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico are among the top 10 states nationally for percentage pay penalties in the U.S.

Table 1 shows the number of teachers per state for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. The table also displays the percent change from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. Arizona (-1.39%) and Nevada (-6.00%) were the only two Mountain West states that experienced a loss in the number of teachers from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. Nevada lost the largest number of teachers (1,432) in the Mountain West from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. New Mexico had the largest percent change at +2.95%, gaining more educators (+614) in 2020-2021 than any other Mountain West state.

¹ National Education Association “Teacher Salary Benchmarks,” 2022. (www.nea.org/resource-library/teacher-salary-benchmarks).

² Economic Policy Institute “The Teacher Pay Penalty Has Hit a New High,” 2022. (www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/).

Table 1: Change in Number of Teachers by State from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 School Year

	Number of Teachers 2019-2020	Number of Teachers 2020-2021	Number of Teachers Gained or Lost	Percent (%) Change
Arizona	62,045	61,180	-965	-1.39%
Colorado	57,546	57,625	+79	+0.14%
Nevada	23,867	22,435	-1,432	-6.00%
New Mexico	20,820	21,434	+614	+2.95%
Utah	30,107	30,551	+444	+1.47%

*Adapted from “Educator Pay and Student Spending: How Does Your State Rank?” *National Education Association*. www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank

Table 2 shows the rankings for average starting teacher salary and average teacher salary for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Rankings shaded in green show a rise in the respective ranking while those shaded in red show a fall in ranking. Colorado has the lowest average starting salary ranking at 48th in 2019-2020 and at 49th in 2020-2021. Utah, the highest-ranking state for average starting salary in the Mountain West, is the only state to experience an improvement in its national ranking from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 going from 16th to 15th. For average teacher salary, Arizona ranked lowest in the Mountain West for both school years (46th in 2019-2020 and 44th in 2020-2021). Arizona, Nevada, and Utah all experienced improvements in their average teacher salary rankings from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, with Nevada moving up 1 spot and Arizona and Utah moving up 2 spots.

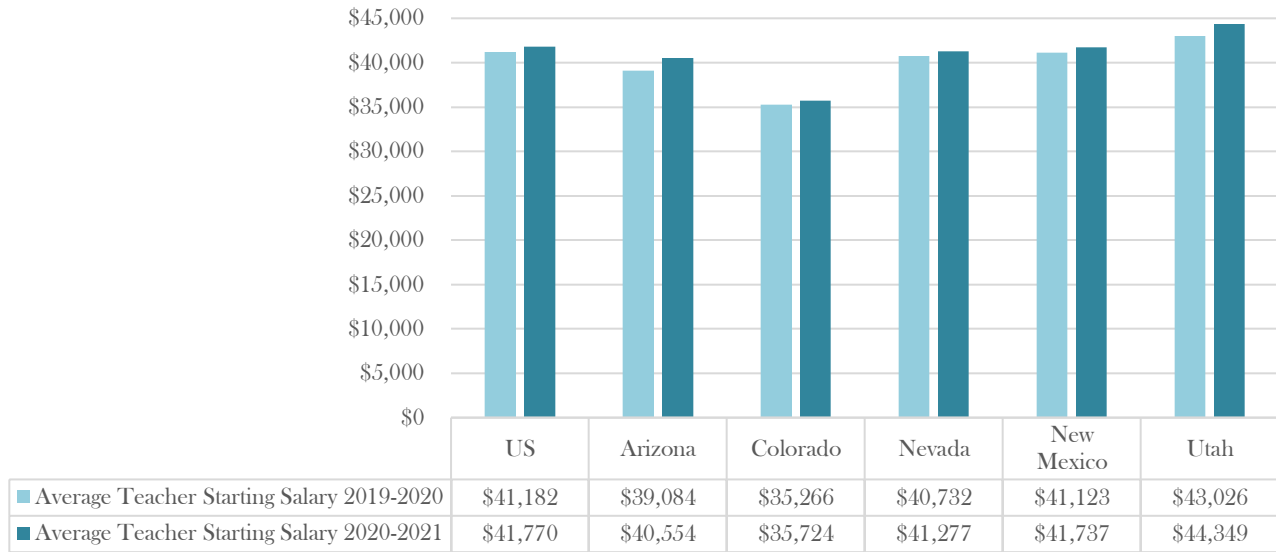
Table 2: Rankings for Average Teacher Salary and Average Starting Teacher Salary, 2019-2021 and 2020-2021

	Average <i>Starting</i> Teacher Salary Rankings		Average Teacher Salary Rankings	
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2019-2020	2020-2021
Arizona	27 th	27 th	46 th	44 th
Colorado	48 th	49 th	25 th	26 th
Nevada	21 st	21 st	28 th	27 th
New Mexico	19 th	20 th	32 nd	32 nd
Utah	16 th	15 th	31 st	29 th

*Adapted from “Educator Pay and Student Spending: How Does Your State Rank?” *National Education Association*. www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank

Figure 1 displays the average starting teacher salary for each Mountain West state for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years. Among Mountain West states, Arizona saw the greatest increase in average starting salary for teachers between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 at \$1,470. Utah had the second largest increase at \$1,323 but already had the highest average starting salary among teachers in the Mountain West, going from \$43,026 in the 2019-2020 school year to \$44,349 in the 2020-2021 school year. Colorado experienced the smallest increase in average starting salary at \$458. Every Mountain West state except for Utah is below the national average for average starting teacher salary.

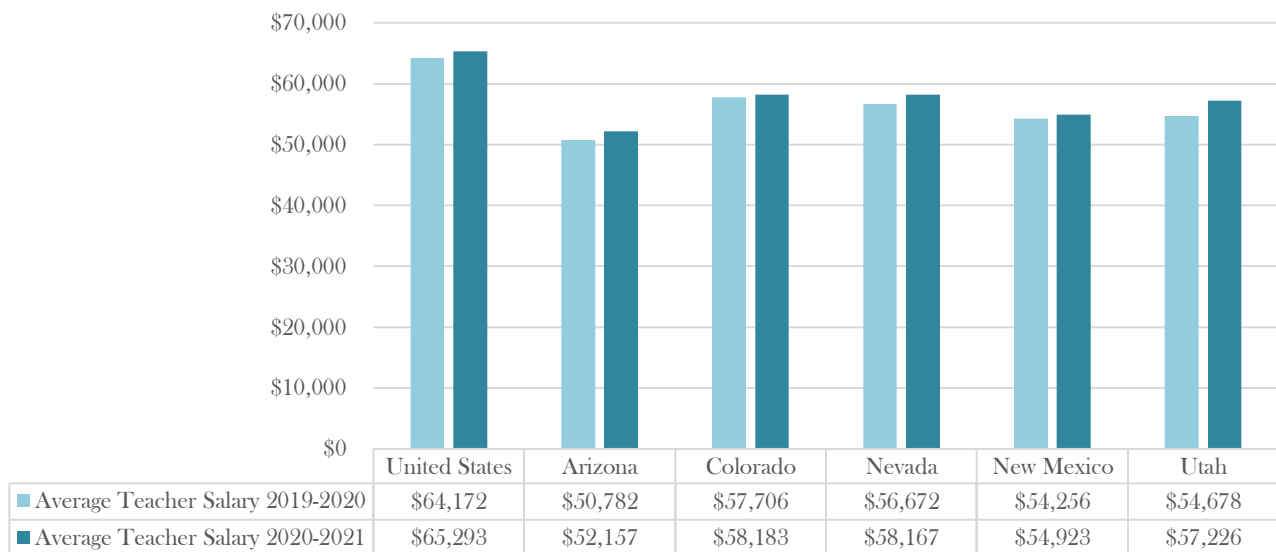
Figure 1: Average Starting Teacher Salary by State, 2019-2021



* Adapted from “Educator Pay and Student Spending: How Does Your State Rank?” *National Education Association*. www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank

Figure 2 shows average teacher salaries in Mountain West states for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years. Arizona had the lowest average teacher salary among Mountain West states in the 2019-2020 school year with an average teacher salary of \$50,782 and the 2020-2021 school year of \$52,157. Colorado saw the smallest increase in average salary in the Mountain West of \$477 (+0.83%), increasing from \$57,706 in the 2019-2020 school year to \$58,183 in the 2020-2021 school year. Utah saw the largest average salary increase in the Mountain West of \$2,548 (+4.66%), going from \$54,678 in the 2019-2020 school year to \$57,226 in the 2020-2021 school year. Every Mountain West state still falls below the national average in average teacher salary for both 2019-2020 (\$64,172) and 2020-2021 (\$65,293).

Figure 2: Average Teacher Salary by State, 2019-2021



* Adapted from “Educator Pay and Student Spending: How Does Your State Rank?” *National Education Association*. www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank

Table 3 shows the minimum living wage and teacher pay penalty for each Mountain West state along with each states' national ranking for teacher pay penalty. The farther the pay penalty percentage is from 0, the higher the pay penalty experienced by teachers. Colorado ranks 51st and has the largest teacher pay penalty (-35.9%), while Nevada has the lowest teacher pay penalty among Mountain West states (-20.4%). Nevada has the highest minimum living wage at \$56,791, while New Mexico has the lowest minimum living wage at \$46,755 among Mountain West states.

Table 3: Minimum Living Wage and Teacher Pay Penalty in the Mountain West, (2021)

	Minimum Living Wage	Teacher Pay Penalty	National Ranking
Arizona	\$52,528	-32.0%	48 th
Colorado	\$53,043	-35.9%	51 st
Nevada	\$56,791	-20.4%	25 th
New Mexico	\$46,755	-27.4%	42 nd
Utah	\$49,686	-22.5%	32 nd

*Adapted from "Educator Pay and Student Spending: How Does Your State Rank?" *National Education Association*. www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank