

THE MESOCRATIC PARTY | POLICY WHITE PAPER

The Education Baseline

A \$100,000 National Average Starting Teacher Salary

Free Public Education from Pre-K Through a Bachelor's Degree

And the Math to Pay for It

Pay the teachers. Free the students. Watch what happens.

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Executive Summary

The federal government funds the difference between current teacher compensation and the new target. Every state receives the same percentage increase — no state gets a larger proportional boost than any other.

1. The Problem

1.1 Teacher Pay Has Declined in Real Terms

The national average starting teacher salary is \$47,976. Adjusted for inflation, this is \$3,728 less than what a starting teacher earned in 2008–2009. Despite nominal increases, teachers have lost purchasing power for over fifteen years. Seventy-seven percent of school districts pay new teachers below \$50,000. In 34 states, the average starting salary is below \$50,000.

The consequences are measurable. Over 75% of states report teacher shortages. Nearly one in four teachers surveyed plans to leave the profession within five years. The pipeline of new teachers entering the profession has declined year over year.

1.2 The Pay Gap with Other Professions

Teachers with a bachelor's degree earn significantly less than other college-educated professionals. The Economic Policy Institute has documented a persistent “teacher wage penalty” that has widened over the past two decades.

An entry-level software engineer starts at roughly \$85,000–\$95,000. An entry-level accountant starts at \$55,000–\$65,000. An entry-level registered nurse starts at \$60,000–\$70,000. A first-year public school teacher starts at \$47,976 and is responsible for the intellectual development of 25–30 children every day.

1.3 State-by-State Disparity

Teacher starting salaries vary by nearly 80% across states. The District of Columbia pays new teachers \$63,373 on average; Montana pays \$35,674. This disparity means that the quality of education a child receives — and the caliber of teacher a community can attract — depends heavily on geography.

2. The Proposal

2.1 Target: \$100,000 National Average Starting Salary

The multiplier: 2.0844x — a 108.4% increase. This multiplier is calculated by dividing the target average (\$100,000) by the current weighted national average (\$47,976). Every state's starting salary is multiplied by the same factor.

2.2 Why a Uniform Percentage

A flat dollar floor (e.g., “every teacher starts at \$100,000”) would create a fairness problem. It would give Montana a 180% raise while giving DC a 58% raise. It would also ignore cost-of-living differences. A uniform percentage increase preserves the existing regional pay structure while lifting every state by the same proportional amount.

2.3 Full Pay Scale Impact

Raising starting salaries without adjusting the rest of the pay scale would create a compression problem. The Mesocratic proposal applies the same 2.0844x multiplier to the entire teacher pay scale.

Experience Level	Current Avg Salary	Proposed Salary	Increase
Starting teacher (national avg)	\$47,976	\$100,000	+\$52,024
10-year teacher	\$60,000	\$125,064	+\$65,064
20-year teacher (national avg)	\$72,030	\$150,110	+\$78,080
Top-step veteran	\$85,000	\$177,174	+\$92,174

3. State-by-State Starting Salary Proposal

The following table shows the current average starting teacher salary in each state, the proposed starting salary (current × 2.0844), the dollar increase, the number of public school teachers, and the estimated annual federal subsidy.

Data sources: NEA Teacher Salary Benchmark Report 2023–24 (starting salaries). NEA Rankings & Estimates 2025 (teacher counts, school year 2023–24).

State	Current Starting	Proposed Starting	Increase	Teachers	Annual Federal
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					Subsidy
Alabama	\$44,610	\$92,984	+\$48,374	47,972	\$2.32B
Alaska	\$52,451	\$109,328	+\$56,877	7,058	\$0.40B
Arizona	\$46,128	\$96,148	+\$50,020	53,857	\$2.69B
Arkansas	\$50,031	\$104,284	+\$54,253	36,221	\$1.97B
California	\$58,409	\$121,746	+\$63,337	269,192	\$17.05B
Colorado	\$42,421	\$88,421	+\$46,000	57,364	\$2.64B
Connecticut	\$49,860	\$103,927	+\$54,067	42,012	\$2.27B
Delaware	\$48,407	\$100,898	+\$52,491	9,584	\$0.50B
District of Columbia	\$63,373	\$132,093	+\$68,720	6,264	\$0.43B
Florida	\$48,639	\$101,382	+\$52,743	187,460	\$9.89B
Georgia	\$43,654	\$90,991	+\$47,337	119,062	\$5.64B
Hawaii	\$51,835	\$108,044	+\$56,209	11,740	\$0.66B
Idaho	\$45,717	\$95,291	+\$49,574	19,924	\$0.99B
Illinois	\$45,061	\$93,924	+\$48,863	128,507	\$6.28B
Indiana	\$45,007	\$93,812	+\$48,805	65,262	\$3.19B
Iowa	\$40,997	\$85,453	+\$44,456	35,612	\$1.58B
Kansas	\$42,800	\$89,211	+\$46,411	37,447	\$1.74B
Kentucky	\$40,161	\$83,711	+\$43,550	42,802	\$1.86B
Louisiana	\$46,682	\$97,303	+\$50,621	44,327	\$2.24B
Maine	\$42,380	\$88,336	+\$45,956	15,440	\$0.71B
Maryland	\$54,439	\$113,471	+\$59,032	61,485	\$3.63B
Massachuset ts	\$52,616	\$109,672	+\$57,056	77,155	\$4.40B
Michigan	\$41,645	\$86,804	+\$45,159	84,721	\$3.83B
Minnesota	\$44,995	\$93,787	+\$48,792	57,735	\$2.82B
Mississippi	\$42,492	\$88,569	+\$46,077	32,218	\$1.48B
Missouri	\$38,871	\$81,022	+\$42,151	67,139	\$2.83B
Montana	\$35,674	\$74,358	+\$38,684	10,831	\$0.42B
Nebraska	\$38,811	\$80,897	+\$42,086	24,157	\$1.02B
Nevada	\$47,355	\$98,706	+\$51,351	24,001	\$1.23B
New Hampshire	\$42,588	\$88,769	+\$46,181	15,526	\$0.72B
New Jersey	\$57,603	\$120,066	+\$62,463	116,984	\$7.31B
New Mexico	\$53,400	\$111,306	+\$57,906	21,575	\$1.25B
New York	\$50,077	\$104,379	+\$54,302	217,522	\$11.81B

North Carolina	\$42,542	\$88,674	+\$46,132	101,655	\$4.69B
North Dakota	\$43,734	\$91,158	+\$47,424	9,472	\$0.45B
Ohio	\$40,982	\$85,422	+\$44,440	107,042	\$4.76B
Oklahoma	\$41,152	\$85,776	+\$44,624	43,697	\$1.95B
Oregon	\$44,446	\$92,642	+\$48,196	30,723	\$1.48B
Pennsylvania	\$50,470	\$105,199	+\$54,729	123,972	\$6.78B
Rhode Island	\$47,205	\$98,393	+\$51,188	11,420	\$0.58B
South Carolina	\$44,693	\$93,157	+\$48,464	54,949	\$2.66B
South Dakota	\$45,530	\$94,902	+\$49,372	9,919	\$0.49B
Tennessee	\$44,897	\$93,582	+\$48,685	68,340	\$3.33B
Texas	\$48,526	\$101,147	+\$52,621	374,947	\$19.73B
Utah	\$55,711	\$116,123	+\$60,412	30,506	\$1.84B
Vermont	\$44,524	\$92,805	+\$48,281	7,964	\$0.38B
Virginia	\$48,666	\$101,438	+\$52,772	95,001	\$5.01B
Washington	\$57,912	\$120,710	+\$62,798	66,167	\$4.16B
West Virginia	\$42,708	\$89,020	+\$46,312	19,222	\$0.89B
Wisconsin	\$42,259	\$88,084	+\$45,825	58,076	\$2.66B
Wyoming	\$50,214	\$104,665	+\$54,451	7,355	\$0.40B
NATIONAL	\$47,976 (avg)	\$100,000 (avg)	+108.4%	3,268,583	\$170.0B

4. How We Pay for It

4.1 The Cost

Total estimated annual federal subsidy: \$253 billion. This represents the difference between current total teacher payroll (~\$233 billion) and the new total (~\$486 billion). States and localities continue to fund their current share. The federal government covers the increase.

4.2 The Funding Source

Item	Annual Cost
Teacher pay (\$100K national avg starting)	\$253B
Free public college tuition	\$65B
Total education investment	\$318B
Remaining surplus (for healthcare, infrastructure, deficit reduction)	\$349B

No new taxes are required. No deficit spending is required. The education investment is funded entirely by the revenue surplus generated by broadening the tax base and applying a 15% flat rate.

4.3 The Fairness Mechanism

The federal subsidy is distributed proportionally. Each state's allocation is based on the number of public school teachers in that state multiplied by the per-teacher salary increase for that state. A taxpayer in Montana is not subsidizing a larger raise for a teacher in New York. Both states receive a 108.4% increase. The proportional investment is identical.

5. Free Public College

5.1 The Proposal

This is not a radical idea. It is how public education already works from kindergarten through 12th grade. We extend the same principle four more years.

5.2 The Cost

Total undergraduate tuition revenue at public institutions is approximately \$80–\$90 billion per year. After existing federal and state grants, the net new federal cost of full tuition elimination is estimated at \$50–\$70 billion annually.

5.3 What It Eliminates

The average bachelor's degree graduate leaves school with approximately \$32,000 in student debt. Sixty percent of graduates borrow. Total student debt in the United States exceeds \$1.8 trillion. The average monthly student loan payment is \$336 — \$4,032 per year — paid for roughly a decade after graduation.

Free public college eliminates this debt entirely for future generations. Over a lifetime, the average college graduate saves approximately \$40,000 in loan repayment — money that flows directly into homeownership, family formation, retirement savings, and consumer spending.

6. Federal Role: Smaller, Stronger, Focused

The Department of Education's role should be limited to three functions:

Distributing federal education funding to states based on transparent, outcome-based formulas.

Setting minimum national standards (not curricula) for literacy, numeracy, and graduation rates.

Ensuring civil rights compliance in all publicly funded schools.

Everything else stays with the states and school districts.

7. What This Means for the Middle Class

If you're a teacher: your starting salary more than doubles. The national average goes from \$47,976 to \$100,000. Under the 15% Plan, a teacher earning \$100,000 with one child pays

federal income tax on just \$50,000. With two children, you pay zero. And your healthcare is free.

If you're a parent: your child can attend any public university in your state, tuition-free. The teacher in front of your child's classroom was drawn from a far deeper, more competitive talent pool because teaching now pays what it's worth.

If you're a student: you start your adult life without a \$32,000 anchor around your neck. No monthly loan payment. No decade of debt. You can buy a house, start a family, and build wealth on a timeline that previous generations took for granted.

If you're a taxpayer: you're investing in the workforce, the economy, and the country's future — funded entirely by the surplus from a simplified, broadened tax code. No new taxes. No deficit. Just math.

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