Utah FOUNDATION Research Report

Report Number 702, August 2011

COMPARING TEACHER COMPENSATION
LOOKING BEYOND THE AVERAGES

HIGHLIGHTS

- This report compares salary levels of teachers with similar education and experience levels, rather than average salaries. Utah teachers place near the middle of the mountain states for most categories of education and experience.
- Like most states, Utah has increased beginning teacher salaries in the last decade more significantly than salaries for veteran teachers with advanced education. However, for both beginning and well-educated veteran teachers, salary increases in Utah have lagged behind five of the other mountain states as well as national trends.
- In the last decade, Wyoming's salary increases for both beginning and veteran teachers have far outstripped the other mountain states, caused by state Supreme Court decisions which found the state's school finance system unconstitutional.
- Over half of all districts in Utah offer incentive pay for teaching in a field with a shortage, the highest of any of the mountain states. Utah teachers are the most likely of the mountain state teachers to earn supplemental pay through another job outside of the school system.
- Utah districts are similar to four large districts sampled in other mountain states with respect to district contributions to teacher retirement funds, although Utah is unique in having moved away from a defined benefit plan.

Simply comparing average teacher salaries for all full-time teachers across states can provide a misleading picture of the relative financial incentives teachers have for working in different states. In over 90 percent of districts in the United States, teaching salaries are based upon a salary schedule that uses experience and education (degrees or credit hours/courses completed) to determine teacher salary. Because of this, average teacher salaries are partly a function of the relative age, experience and education level of the teaching corps.

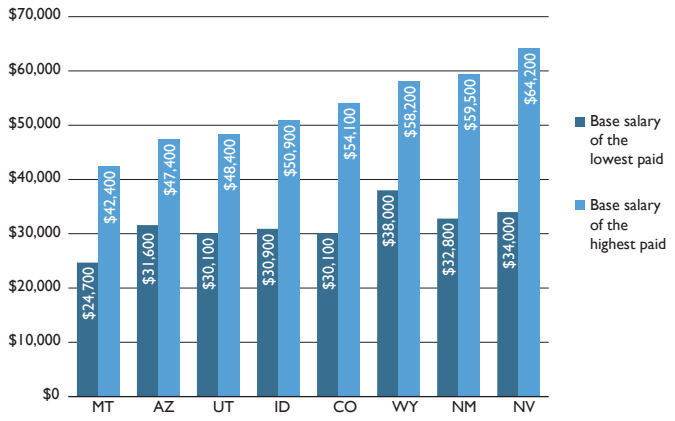
States with a relatively young, less educated, and less experienced teaching corps will appear to have relatively lower teacher salaries, as noted in Utah Foundation's 2007 report on Teacher Attrition. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Utah's average teacher pay is the lowest among mountain states, a full $5,000 below the mountain states average, and 49th in the nation. However, NCES data also show that Utah's teachers are the fifth lowest in years of teaching experience and the second highest in the proportion of teachers with less than four years of experience. Comparing salaries for teachers with similar levels of education and experience reduces variations in salary levels that are simply a result of demographic differences and instead compares differences in teacher salary schedules across states. This report focuses on comparisons of teacher salaries across the mountain states for specific levels of teacher education and experience.

TEACHER SALARY COMPARISONS FOR 2007-08

Figure 1 shows the lowest and highest average base salaries for the mountain states in 2007-08.[1] Most salary figures for teachers examine "base salary," which is a teacher's salary for performing regular classroom duties described in the teacher contract, and usually determined by the salary schedule. Teachers may earn additional wages on top of the base salary in the form of incentive pay and supplemental pay.[2]

New teachers with no experience and no credits above the minimum required for teacher certification (or with provisional certification) are the lowest paid teachers. This would typically be a first-year teacher right out of college. For 2007-08, Montana paid the least of the mountain states to the lowest paid teachers at $24,700, while Wyoming paid the most at $38,000. Utah and Colorado paid the second lowest base salary at $30,100. For the

Figure 1: Average lowest and highest yearly base salaries paid to full-time teachers among all districts, by state: 2007-08

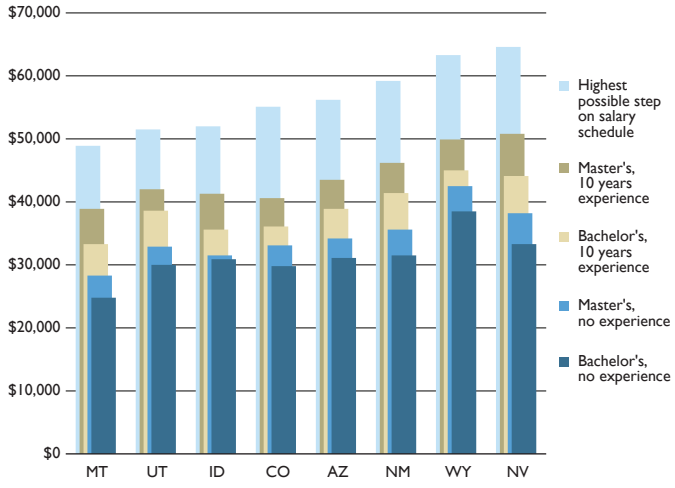


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (NCES).

lowest paid teachers, Utah's base salary equaled about 80 percent of Wyoming's base salary in 2007-08. In districts with salary schedules, teachers on the highest "step" of the salary schedule earn the highest base pay. The highest paid teachers in any school are typically veteran teachers with decades of experience and often an advanced degree and other additional course credits. For 2007-08, for the highest paid teachers, Nevada paid the most of the mountain states at $64,200. Utah came in 6th of the eight states at $48,400, or about 75 percent of Nevada's base salary.

Figure 2 allows a comparison of average salary schedules across the mountain states for 2007-08.[3] It is important to note that Figure 2 only includes those teachers who work in schools and districts that utilize a set salary schedule for teacher salaries. This percentage varies significantly from state to state (see note under Figure 2). Districts that do not have prescribed salary schedules negotiate teacher salaries by individual contract as in the private sector (rather than a contract with the local teachers union). Nonetheless, the percentage

Figure 2: Average yearly teacher base salary by degree and experience (for public school districts with salary schedules*), 2007-08



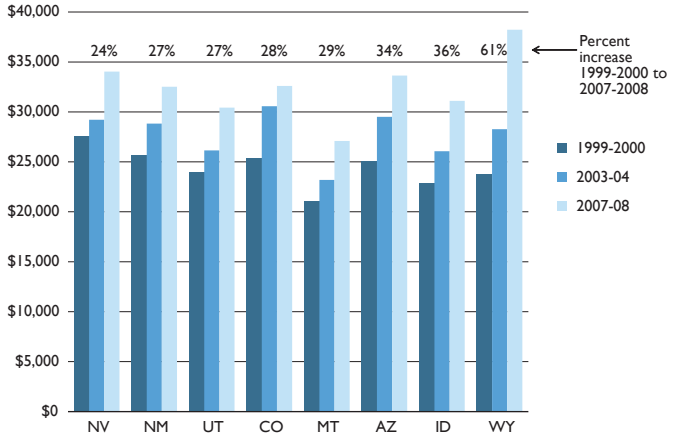
Source: NCES.

*Percent of districts with salary schedules: AZ = 63%; CO = 98%; ID = 100%; MT = 84%; NV = 100%; NM = 98%; UT = 100%; WY = 86%. Note that many of the districts not employing salary schedules are actually individual charter schools employing a relatively small number of teachers.

of teachers that receive a salary according to a salary schedule is most likely much less disparate than these percentages suggest. For example, Arizona's especially low percentage of districts with salary schedules can be attributed to the large presence of charter schools in the state, since an individual charter school is its own local education agency and counted as a district, and typically does not utilize a salary schedule. Thus, the percentage of teachers working under a salary schedule in Arizona is almost certainly much higher than the 64% figure suggests, since many of the districts not utilizing salary schedules are in fact individual charter schools employing a small number of teachers.

Figure 2 compares salary schedules, which apply to most or all public school teachers across different states, rather than the salaries of all public school teachers. This figure also shows the potential for salary growth for teachers on a salary schedule as they increase in experience and education. While Montana ranks last for every

Figure 3: Average base salary for full-time public school teachers with a bachelor's degree as their highest degree and two or fewer years of experience (in current dollars)



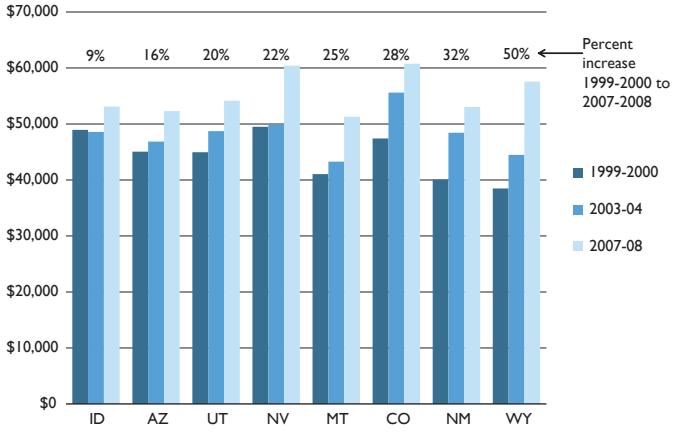
Source: NCES.

category, the ranking for the other states varies by category. For example, Utah ranks 6th of the eight states for teachers who hold a bachelor's degree and have no years of teaching experience, 6th for master's with no experience and 5th for bachelor's with 10 years of experience, surpassing Montana, Idaho and Colorado. However, the states in the middle of the rankings are grouped quite close, making Utah close to average for the mountain states.

TRENDS IN TEACHER SALARIES

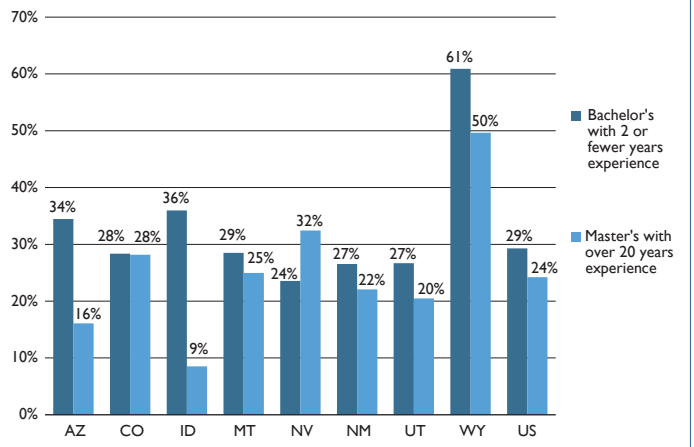
From 1999-2000 to 2007-08, salaries for the least experienced and least educated teachers increased by an average of 29 percent across the U.S. Three mountain states, Arizona, Idaho and Wyoming surpassed the national average, with Wyoming demonstrating the most dramatic increase in beginning teacher salaries by increasing salaries from about $24,000 to over $38,000, an increase of over 60 percent (see Figure 3). During the same period, Utah's average base salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree and less than two or fewer years of experience increased by 27 percent, from about $24,000 to about $30,000. Utah's average salary for teachers with a bachelor's degree and two or fewer years of experience ranked 5th of the eight mountain states for 1999-2000, then 6th in 2003-04, and 7th in 2007-08 as

Figure 4: Average base salary for full-time public school teachers with a master's degree as their highest degree and over 20 years experience



Source: NCES.

Figure 5: Percent increase in average base salary for full-time public school teachers, by degree and experience level, from 1999-2000 to 2007-08



Source: NCES.

Utah slipped behind Wyoming and then Idaho. (It is assumed that variations in average base salary due to changes in the average number of years of experience and number of credits earned for this subset of teachers is minimal given that teachers could only have zero, one, or two years of experience to be included in this category.)[4]

The Wyoming legislature has dramatically increased per pupil expenditures in the last decade, motivated largely by Wyoming state Supreme Court decisions dating back to 1980 that found the state's school finance system unconstitutional.[5] Wyoming currently ranks 6th (out of 50 states plus DC) in per pupil spending, spending $14,573 in 2008-09 per pupil, according to the U.S. Census' most recent Public Education Finances report. The mountain state with the next highest per pupil spending is Montana, which ranks 25th and spends $10,059 or 69% of what Wyoming spends per pupil. Five of the eight mountain states (including Utah) rank 40th or lower in per pupil spending.

From 1999-2000 to 2007-08, nationally salaries for the most veteran and most educated teachers increased by 24 percent. Four mountain states, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming surpassed the national average, with Wyoming demonstrating the most dramatic increase in veteran teacher salaries by increasing salaries from about $38,000 to almost $58,000, an increase of 50 percent (see Figure 4). During the same period, Utah average base salaries for teachers with master's degree and over 20 years of experience increased by 21 percent, from $45,000 to about $54,000. Utah's average salary for teachers with a master's degree and more than 20 years of experience ranked 5th of the eight mountain states for 1999-2000, then 3rd in 2003-04, and 4th in 2007-08. (It should be noted that for this subset of teachers there is great potential variation in average base salary due to changes in the average number of years of experience and number of credits earned since teachers within this category could vary in years of experience by 10 or more years.)[6]

It appears that all mountain states, with the conspicuous exception of Nevada, have increased beginning teacher salaries by a greater percentage than they have increased experienced teacher salaries (see Figure 5). This pattern mirrors national trends. Nationally for the same period, average base salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree and less than two years of experience increased by 29 percent versus 24 percent for teachers with a master's degree and over 20 years of experience. Arizona and Idaho show especially dramatic discrepancies in the percentage increase for beginning versus veteran teachers. By increasing beginning teacher salaries without proportionately increasing the rest of the salary schedule, states "front load" or compress the teaching salary schedule (teachers begin with a higher salary, but then experience lower potential for salary growth). This approach suggests a dramatic need for new recruits to alleviate teacher shortages with relatively less focus on retaining seasoned teachers. (It should be noted that this assumes the average years of experience for the most experienced category of teachers stayed relatively constant during the eight-year period. If, however, this average decreased significantly during this period, this would diminish average salaries of teachers with a master's degree with over 20 years of experience for purely demographic reasons, and could distort conclusions about salary schedules. It is not possible to determine the average years of experience of subgroups of teachers by state.)[7]

INCENTIVE PAY AND SUPPLEMENTAL PAY

Many schools and districts offer teachers the opportunity to earn pay above their base salary. Figure 6 shows the percentage of districts for each state that used various pay incentives for teachers in 2007-08.[8] Incentives for National Board Certification and "excellence in teaching" reflect district efforts to improve and reward teacher quality, while incentives for working in less desirable locations or fields of

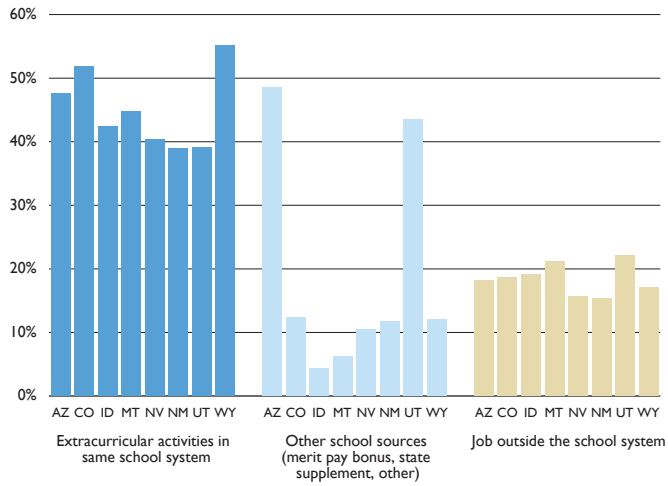
Figure 6: Percentage of public school districts that used pay incentives for various reasons, by state: 2007-08

	National Board Certification	Excellence in Teaching	Less Desirable Location	Fields of Shortage
U.S.	25%	10%	6%	15%
Arizona	21%	47%	18%	26%
Colorado	20%	5%	12%*	24%
Idaho	38%	2%*	9%	22%
Montana	13%	6%	6%*	8%
Nevada	75%	19%	31%	49%
New Mexico	52%	7%	14%	33%
Utah	**40%**	**35%**	**13%**	**58%**
Wyoming	72%	12%	9%	28%

*Due to large standard error for this estimate, data should be interpreted with caution.

Source: NCES.

Figure 7: Percentage of regular full-time public school teachers who earn salary supplements, 2007-08



Source: NCES.

shortage are generally used to help alleviate teacher shortages. The term "excellence in teaching" is left open to the interpretation of the administrator who completes the survey issued by NCES.

To earn National Board Certification, a teacher must pass several assessments in content and pedagogy as well as submit for review portfolios that demonstrate how his or her teaching meets the board's standards for teaching effectiveness. Over the past decade, researchers have reached mixed results regarding whether teachers with National Board Certification are more effective than other teachers.[9] However, a 2008 congressionally-mandated report by the National Research Council of the National Academies (a meta-analysis of past research regarding National Board Certification), found that "students taught by teachers who are board certified make larger gains on achievement test scores than those taught by teachers who are not."[10] The report also noted that further research is necessary to determine whether the process itself of seeking National Board Certification makes teachers more effective or if the certification is merely a "signal" because high-quality teachers are more likely to complete the certification process.

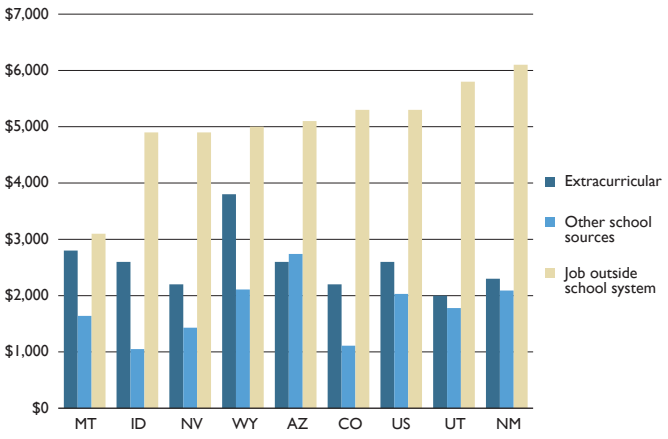
The mountain states vary widely in the prevalence of pay incentives. For example, only 13 percent of districts in Montana provide a pay incentive for National Board Certification while 72 percent of Wyoming districts and 75 percent of Nevada districts provide this incentive. In Utah, 40 percent of districts offer a pay incentive for National Board Certification. Utah has the second highest percentage (35 percent) of districts offering pay incentives for Excellence in Teaching (following Arizona). Utah has the highest percentage of districts (58 percent) offering pay incentives for teaching in a field of shortage. The nature of the pay incentives can also vary widely. For example, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website, for 2010, Idaho teachers receive a $2,000 annual increase for five years, up to 20 Montana teachers receive a one-time bonus of $3,000, while Nevada teachers receive a five percent salary increase.[11]

Figure 7 shows the percentage of public school teachers earning various kinds of supplemental salaries while Figure 8 shows the average annual amount of supplemental pay by pay type.[12] The most common kind of supplemental salary for public school teachers in the mountain states is for extracurricular activities within the school system where the teacher works. From 39 percent (in Utah and New Mexico) to 55 percent (in Wyoming) of public school teachers in the mountain states earn this type of supplemental pay. Wyoming public school teachers not only are the most likely to earn supplemental pay through extracurricular activities, but also have the highest average earnings through supplemental pay for extracurricular activities ($3,800). Utah public school teachers have the lowest average supplemental pay for extracurricular activities ($2,000). A relatively low percentage of public school teachers receive any other kind of supplemental pay, with the exception of Arizona and Utah, where 49 and 44 percent of teachers, respectively, earn some type of other supplemental pay through school sources (the type of pay is not specified, although it may include merit pay bonuses or a state supplement). Arizona public school teachers are the most likely to receive other types of supplemental pay from school sources and also have the highest average supplemental pay for this category ($2,740). For the other six mountain states, 12 percent or less of public school teachers supplemental pay through their school system that is not related to extracurricular activities.

Interestingly, Utah teachers are the most likely of the mountain state teachers to earn supplemental pay through another job outside of the school system. Twenty-two percent of Utah teachers work outside the school system to supplement their teaching salary, compared to between 15 and 21 percent of public school teachers in the other mountain states. Utah public school teachers earn the second highest amount through jobs outside the school system ($5,800), after New Mexico ($6,100). Compared to Utah public school teachers, Montana public school teachers earn only about half as much on average through outside jobs ($3,100). For public school teachers in all of the mountain states, jobs outside the school system provide the largest amount of supplemental pay annually.

Figure 9 gives a sense of how much teachers are supplementing their teaching salaries, from both school and non-school sources. (When comparing average salaries across states, it is important to remember that averages are influenced by the relative experience and education

Figure 8: Average amount of supplemental pay by type of supplemental pay, 2007-08



Source: NCES.

Figure 9: Base salary, total average earnings from all sources, and percent of annual earnings from supplemental pay for full-time teachers, 2007-08

	Base Salary	Average Annual Earnings from All Sources	Percent of Annual Earnings from Supplemental Pay
U.S.	$49,600	$51,900	4.4%
Nevada	46,300	48,100	3.7%
New Mexico	43,200	45,300	4.6%
Idaho	42,200	44,300	4.7%
Montana	39,400	41,400	4.8%
Colorado	45,000	47,300	4.9%
Utah	**41,900**	**44,700**	**6.3%**
Wyoming	48,900	52,200	6.3%
Arizona	40,400	43,900	8.0%

Source: NCES.

of the teaching corps in each state.) For public school teachers in the mountain states, supplemental pay comprises from 3.7 percent (in Nevada) to eight percent (in Arizona) of total average annual earnings. For Utah public schools teachers, supplemental pay contributes 6.3 percent of annual average earnings.[13]

TEACHER BENEFITS

There is no interstate comparison of teacher benefits. Utah Foundation's 2007 report on teacher attrition compared the percentage of instructional expenditures for compensation devoted to benefits across the mountain states. In this comparison, Utah appeared to have the highest benefit level of the mountain states. However, this comparison may be misleading since instructional expenditures include the wages of all instructional staff, including those instructional employees who do not receive benefits. NCES data do not allow us to determine the percentage of instructional employees that receive benefits. A state, then, that employs a relatively high percentage of instructional personnel that do not receive benefits would have a lower percentage of instructional expenditures devoted to benefits. Utah's relatively high percentage of instructional expenditures for compensation devoted to benefits may then simply be an indication that Utah employs relatively few instructional employees (such as aides) who do not receive benefits, and may not necessarily be an indication that Utah's benefits are unusually generous. (It should be noted that part-time versus full-time employment status also does not necessarily indicate whether or not an employee receives benefits.) Thus, the percentage of instructional expenditures for compensation devoted to instructional benefits does not allow us to compare the relative generosity of benefits for instructional employees (such as teachers) who do receive benefits across states.

Recently, the National Center of Education Statistics began a pilot Teacher Compensation Survey in which it was noted that the survey was limited by the fact that "many SEAs [state education agencies] do not have the capacity to provide health and retirement benefits data." Benefits data, including health, retirement, and other benefits, were only available for six of the 17 states that participated in the 2006-07 Teacher Compensation Survey.[14]

The Utah State Office of Education publishes data on the median level of benefits for classroom teachers as part of the Superintendent's Annual Report.[15] However, we were unable to find equivalent data for the other mountain states. In order to provide some comparison of the relative financial incentives a new teacher might face with respect to working in Utah versus other mountain states, Utah Foundation identified large districts in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho and Nevada as well as Utah and attempted to determine the amount of health and retirement benefits a beginning teacher would receive in each district. Select benefits data were collected from the following Utah districts: Alpine School District, Canyons School District, Jordan School District, and Salt Lake City School District. Data were also collected from the following districts in mountain states outside of Utah: Mesa Public Schools (Arizona); Jefferson County Public Schools (Colorado); Boise Independent School District (Idaho); Clark

Figure 10: Salary and retirement benefits for beginning teachers in selected large districts in Utah and other mountain states

	Beginning Teacher Salary	District Contribution to State Retirement Fund	District Contribution to Social Security	District's Total Contribution to Retirement	Required Employee Contribution to State Retirement Fund	Employee Contribution to Social Security	Employee's Total Required Contribution to Retirement	Beginning Teacher Salary Plus District's Total Contribution towards Retirement Benefits
Utah Districts								
Alpine School District	$32,018	10.00%	6.20%	16.20%	0.00% (2)	4.20%	4.20%	$37,205
Canyons School District	32,407	10.00%	6.20%	16.20%	0.00% (2)	4.20%	4.20%	37,657
Jordan School District	32,889	10.00%	6.20%	16.20%	0.00% (2)	4.20%	4.20%	38,217
Salt Lake City School District	37,280	10.00%	6.20%	16.20%	0.00% (2)	4.20%	4.20%	43,319
Districts in Other Mountain States								
Clark County, NV	$34,688	23.75%	0.00%	23.75%	0.00% (3)	0.00%	0.00%	$42,926
Jefferson County, CO	33,616	14.75%	0.00%	14.75%	8.00%	0.00%	8.00%	38,574
Boise, ID	31,558	10.39%	6.20%	16.59%	6.23%	4.20%	10.43%	36,793
Mesa, AZ	33,908 (1)	9.87%	6.20%	16.07%	11.13%	4.20%	15.33%	39,357

Notes:
All data are for school year 2011-2012, except Clark County and Jefferson County for which the data are for school year 2010-2011.

1) Supplemental funding from Proposition 301 (Classroom Site Fund) and Proposition 202 (Instructional Improvement Fund) provides an additional 4.90% in salary annually ($1,661 for beginning teachers), which would make the annual salary for beginning teachers $35,569. However, the revenue for this supplemental funding is based on state sales tax revenue, state land trust sales, and gaming proceeds which fluctuate each year. Therefore, the actual amount of supplemental salary that teachers receive may fluctuate annually, and thus we have used only the base salary amount (without this supplemental funding) in the table above.

2) This amount may increase for those participating in the hybrid retirement option -- pension plus 401(k) -- if the yearly pension contribution rate exceeds the 10% the district pays. For additional information about Utah's recently reformed retirement system for teachers, see Tier 2 Public Employee's Retirement System, "Choose Your Path," <https://www.urs.org/pdf/Miscellaneous/tier2PublicEmployeeChoose.pdf> (29 August 2011).

3) If the actuarially required contribution rate to the pension fund increases in Nevada, the districts and the employees normally equally share the increased cost. Employees pay their share by forgoing scheduled salary increases or salary decreases. Thus, even though the employee contribution to retirement continues to be 0%, employee salaries are diminished to compensate for the increased cost of funding the pension. The reverse is also true (for decreases in the contribution rate).

Sources: Salary and retirement data collected through state retirement fund and district websites, phone conversations and emails with staff in the human resources and accounting departments of the various districts, as well as phone conversation and emails with staff of the state retirement funds.

County School District (Nevada). These large districts outside of Utah would be expected to try to recruit new teachers from Utah's education schools, particularly if facing a teacher shortage.

Figure 10 shows the beginning salary and district and employee contribution towards retirement benefits for beginning teachers in select districts in Utah and other mountain states.[16] This table shows that Boise has the lowest beginning teacher salary of the eight districts surveyed, while Alpine, Canyons, and Jordan School Districts (Utah) have the 2nd, 3rd and 4th lowest beginning teacher salaries (note that Utah's median beginning salary for all Utah districts, $32,689, is very similar to the beginning salary in these three districts). In contrast, Salt Lake City School District (Utah) has the highest beginning teacher salary of the eight districts.

Districts provide various types of benefits to teachers as part of their overall compensation, in addition to retirement benefits, including health insurance and unemployment insurance. Retirement and health insurance make up the lion's share of any benefits package. Although we attempted to collect health insurance data from the eight districts for this analysis, the data collected were not sufficiently consistent to include in this report. While some districts (such as Jefferson County and Clark County School Districts) pay a set amount for health benefits for any employee (and then require the employee to pay any difference between this amount and the actual premium for the given health plan and number of dependents elected), other districts pay widely varying amounts in health premiums for employees depending on the number of dependents covered per employee and the type of plan (HMO, PPO, high-deductible, etc.) elected. These districts with variable health insurance costs provided either a range for the amount the district pays for health benefits, a lower limit for the value of health benefits, or a best estimate of the average or typical value of health benefits. These various ways of representing the value of health benefits in the districts were disparate enough to make a fair or useful comparison of health benefits in the eight mountain state districts very difficult.[17]

The vast majority of teachers participate in a defined benefit pension plan. In a 2010 survey of 108 large public school districts conducted by the National Education Association (NEA), 83 percent of pension plans were defined benefit plans, with an additional seven percent plans that are predominantly defined benefit with defined contribution features. Six percent of the plans in the survey allow employees to choose between a defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan. Only four percent of plans surveyed were purely defined contribution plans.[18] In a defined benefit pension plan, employees are guaranteed a future benefit amount typically based upon years of service and final salary. The amount that the employer and employee contribute to the pension fund may fluctuate depending on actuarially determined funding requirements. The four school districts in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, and Nevada all participate in defined benefit pension plans as part of their states' public employees' retirement system.

Utah recently reformed its state retirement pension plan so that new members of the Utah Retirement System (such as teachers newly hired by the four Utah districts surveyed) must elect to participate in either a hybrid plan (defined benefit plus defined contribution in the form of a 401(k)) or a purely defined contribution plan (401(k)). In a defined contribution plan, the employer contributes a specific amount and the benefit level at retirement varies depending on an individual's investment choices.

It should also be noted that Mesa and Boise School Districts as well as all Utah districts participate in Social Security, while Clark County and Jefferson County School Districts do not. According to the NEA survey, employers and employees contribute, on average, much more to their retirement plans when all or most members do not participate in Social Security. Normally, employees and employers contribute equally to Social Security. At this time, the contribution rate for employers and employees would normally be 6.2% for a combined amount of 12.4%, but presently teachers and all other employees participating in Social Security are enjoying a payroll tax "holiday" of 2%. Consequently, while employers continue to pay 6.2% of an employee's salary into Social Security, employees only pay 4.2% of their salaries into Social Security. This provision is set to expire at the end of 2011, although federal legislation could extend it.

Typically, both employees and employers are required to contribute to a teacher's retirement fund. Of the eight districts surveyed, Clark County School District (Nevada) was unique in requiring no employee contribution to retirement, resulting in a higher percentage of net pay for Clark County School District employees. In fact, in almost all school districts in Nevada (Washoe County School District is one exception), employees have no required contribution to the retirement fund. In the NEA survey, less than 10 percent of the large public school districts surveyed required no retirement contribution from employees. In terms of the overall amount contributed by the district to the teacher's retirement fund, Clark County School District is, by far, the most generous of the eight districts sampled, contributing 23.75% of the employee's salary towards the state's retirement fund. All Utah districts contribute 16% of the teacher's salary into retirement funds (including Social Security), which is very similar to the contribution rates of Boise and Mesa School Districts (16.59% and 16.07% respectively). Jefferson County School District's contribution rate is slightly lower at 14.75%. Thus, Utah districts' retirement contribution rates seem on par with most of the large districts in other mountain states.

In terms of the value of salary plus retirement benefits, Salt Lake City and Clark County (Nevada) School Districts are the most generous, providing approximately $43,000 in salary and retirement annually to a beginning teacher. The district with the lowest combined salary and retirement is Boise School District (Idaho) at $36,800. The remaining six mountain districts sampled have closely clustered totals that fall between $37,200 and $39,400.

CONCLUSION

Comparisons of average teacher salaries across states can be misleading because of the different demographics of the teaching corps in various states. Therefore, this report focuses on comparing salary levels of teachers with similar education and experience levels (the main determinants of teacher pay). Of the eight mountain states, Utah ranks in the lower half for pay levels for both the lowest and highest paid teachers. For teachers in districts that utilize salary schedules, which is a large majority of districts, Utah teachers place near the middle of the mountain states for most categories of education and experience except for the highest salary range. Like most mountain states (and most states nationally), Utah has increased beginning teacher salaries in the last decade more significantly than salaries for

veteran teachers with advanced education, perhaps demonstrating a greater concern with recruitment than retention. However, for both beginning and well-educated veteran teachers, salary increases in Utah have lagged behind five of the other mountain states as well as national trends.

In addition to base pay for completing contractual duties, teachers often have the opportunity to earn supplemental pay within the school system, and may also seek additional income from non-school sources. Compared to both the U.S. and the other mountain states, Utah districts are more likely to offer pay incentives aimed at increasing teacher effectiveness or filling teacher shortages. Over half of all districts in Utah offer incentive pay for teaching in a field with a shortage, the highest of any of the mountain states. Utah and New Mexico teachers are the least likely in the mountain states to earn supplemental pay for extracurricular activities, and Utah teachers have the lowest average pay for extracurricular activities. On the other hand, Utah ranks 2nd of the mountain states for the percentage of teachers who earn supplemental pay through school sources besides extracurricular activities, such as through the types of incentive pay mentioned above. Utah teachers are the most likely of the mountain state teachers to earn supplemental pay through another job outside of the school system, and earn the second highest amount through jobs outside the school system, after New Mexico. Since obtaining employment outside of a teacher's school most likely requires more effort and initiative than seeking supplemental pay by taking on additional duties within one's own school, this finding may suggest that Utah teachers are more likely to feel that a second job is a financial necessity than teachers in other mountain states. Utah teachers rank 3rd highest within the mountain states for the percentage of a teacher's annual income (6.3%) coming from supplemental sources.

Finally, Utah's benefit levels for teachers have in the past been seen as comparatively generous based on the share of instructional compensation devoted to benefits. However, this basis for comparison does not take into account the relative percentage of instructional staff in each state that receives salary but no benefits, and therefore cannot accurately describe the relative benefit levels for those instructional employees who do receive benefits. In fact, benefits data for teachers is generally not available and often not even collected. To give a sense of Utah teacher benefits levels compared to mountain state teacher benefit levels, Utah Foundation collected retirement benefit information from large districts in Utah and four other mountain states. These data suggest that Utah districts are similar to districts in other mountain states with respect to district contributions to teacher retirement funds, although Utah is unique in having moved away from a defined benefit plan. Clark County School District in Nevada is noticeably the most generous of the eight large mountain districts sampled with respect to retirement, contributing 23.75% of a teacher's salary and requiring no contribution from employees.

While Salt Lake City School District has the highest beginning teacher salary of the eight districts sampled, the other three Utah districts have beginning teacher salaries that rank in the bottom half of the districts sampled (5th, 6th, and 7th), surpassing only Boise School District. The rank order of the districts remains the same for beginning salary plus district contribution to retirement: Salt Lake City School District ranks 1st, barely surpassing Clark County School District while Boise School District continues to rank last. For the Alpine, Canyons, and Jordan School Districts, the value of salary plus retirement benefits falls below Clark County (Nevada), Jefferson County (Colorado), and Mesa (Arizona) School Districts, although these Utah districts are very close to the Colorado example.

ENDNOTES

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17 Perhaps with more time, a solid comparison of health benefits could be made by comparing employees in similar age groups with similar numbers of dependents across these districts, but resources did not allow for such an analysis in this report.

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