

GUAM FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

AFT Local 1581

PAID LAST IN THE NATION

What federal wage data says about what Guam pays its workers

A summary for lawmakers

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2025. National Education Association Rankings and Estimates, April 2026.

Mangilao, Guam · August 4, 2026

The short version

The federal government publishes what workers are paid in every state and territory. We compared Guam against all of them. The phrase on the front of this document is not a slogan. It is the finding.

53rd of 54

Guam ranks 53rd out of 54 states and territories for what the typical worker earns. Only Puerto Rico pays less.

\$14,330

How much less the typical Guam worker earns each year than the typical American worker. Guam is \$36,650. The country is \$50,980.

152 of 235

The number of jobs where Guam pays the lowest or second lowest wage in the country, out of 235 jobs we were able to rank.

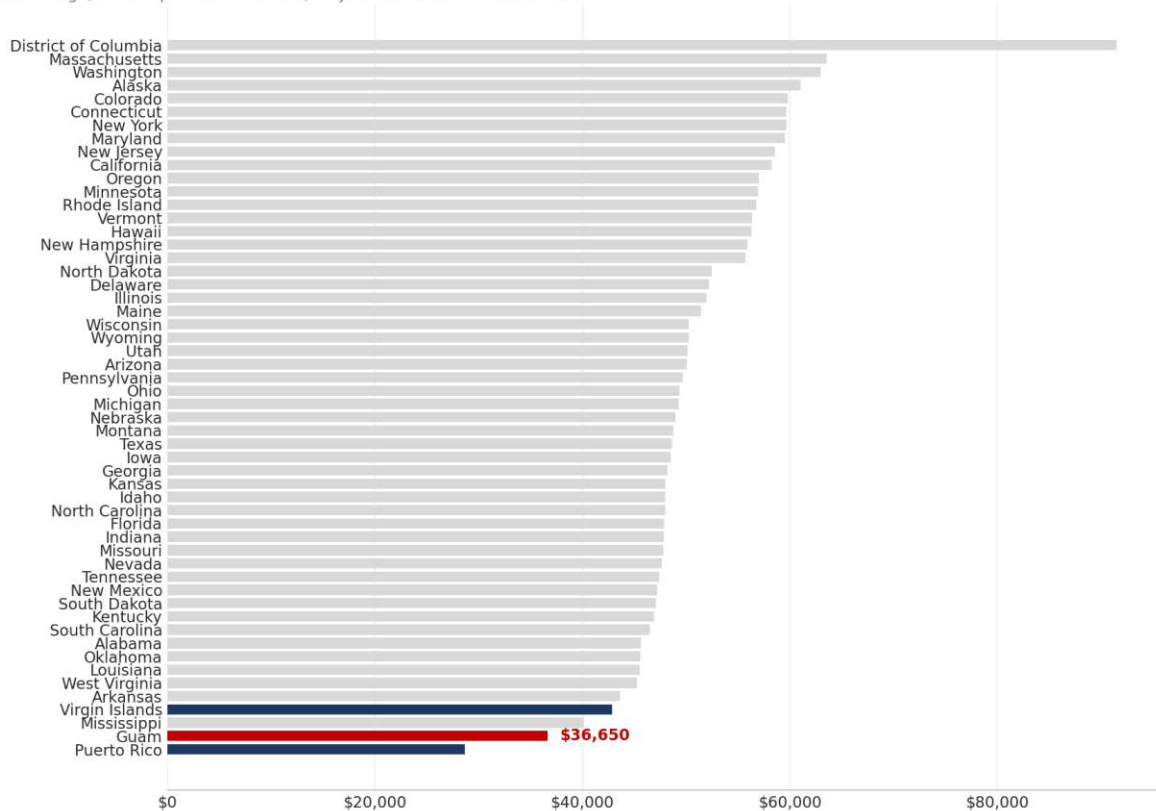
The wage figures here are federal, from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the national teacher average is from the National Education Association. The teacher pay schedule figures are from the Government of Guam. Where a number comes from GFT rather than one of those sources, the page says so.

Guam is second from the bottom

This chart shows the middle wage in every state and territory. Half of workers earn more than this number and half earn less. Guam is in red.

Guam is second to last in the nation on what a typical worker earns

Median annual wage, all occupations combined, May 2025. 54 states and territories.



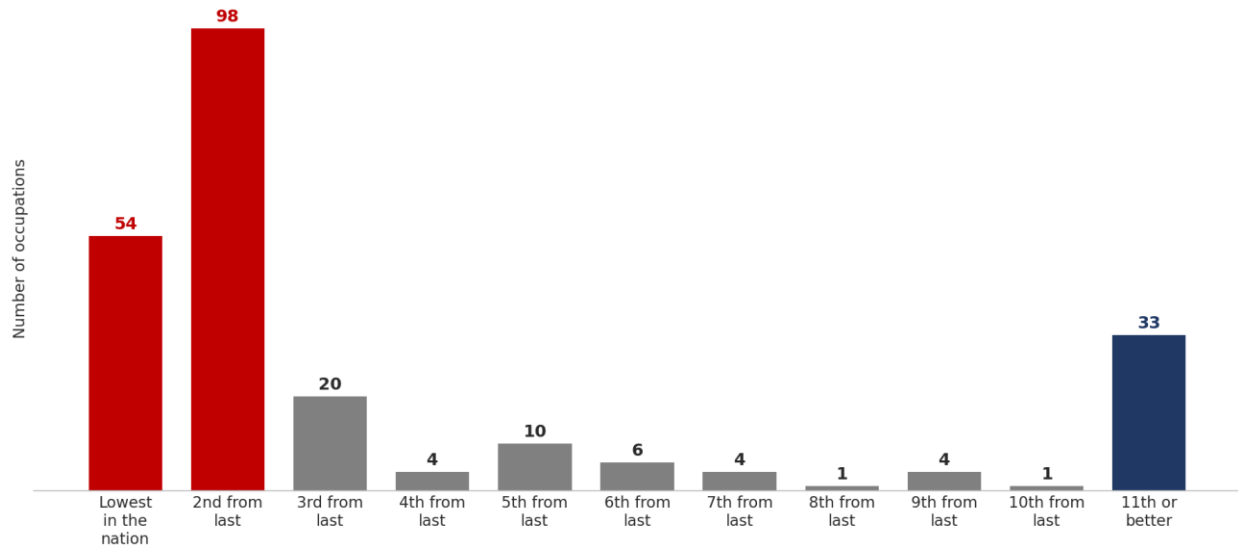
Guam is not near the bottom. Guam is at the bottom. All fifty states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands pay more. The only place that pays less is Puerto Rico.

This is not one bad year in one industry, it is years of neglect

We ranked Guam against every other state and territory in 235 different jobs. This chart counts how many times Guam finished in each position.

In 152 of 235 occupations, Guam is last or second to last

Where Guam finishes among the areas that report each occupation. 235 occupations ranked.



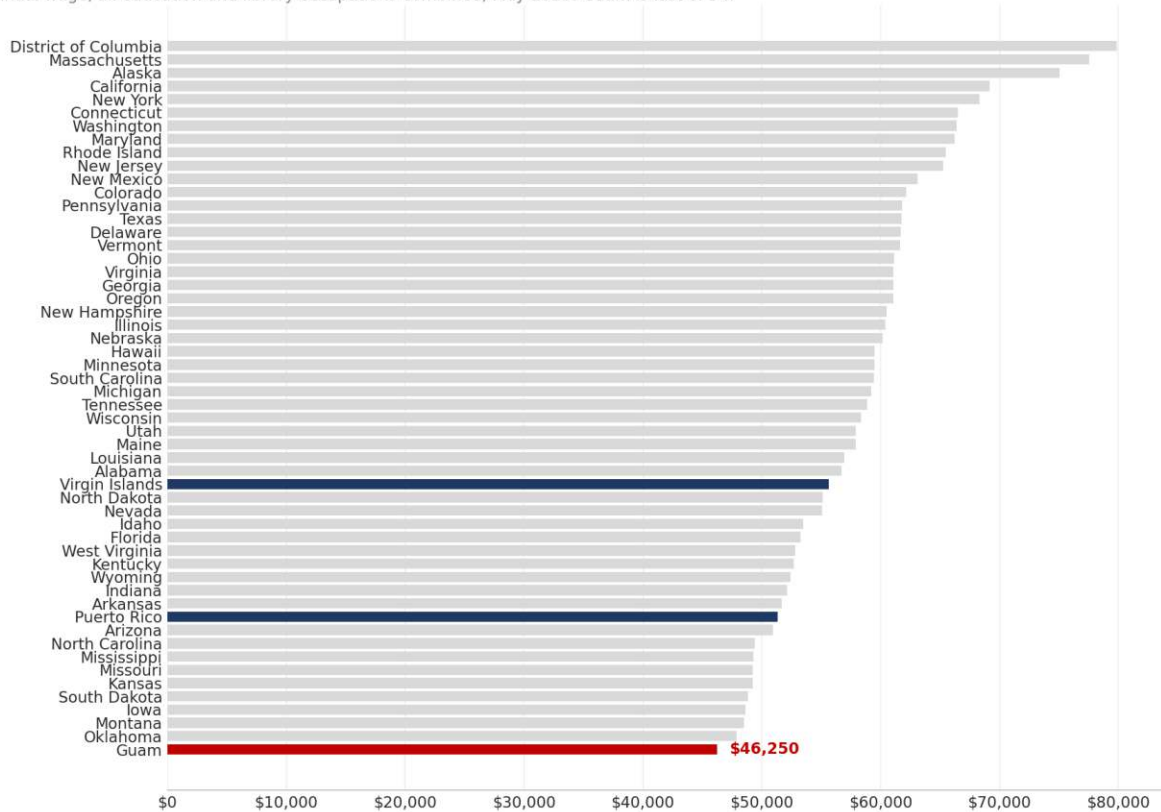
Guam pays the lowest wage in the country in 54 jobs. Guam is second from last in another 98. Added together, that is 152 of 235 jobs, or 65 percent. Guam pays above the U.S. median in 12 jobs out of 235.

Education is the worst case

Add up everyone who works in education and libraries on Guam. Teachers, teaching assistants, substitutes, tutors, librarians and school staff. Then compare that to the same group in every other state and territory.

Guam pays education workers less than any state or territory

Median annual wage, all education and library occupations combined, May 2025. Guam is last of 54.



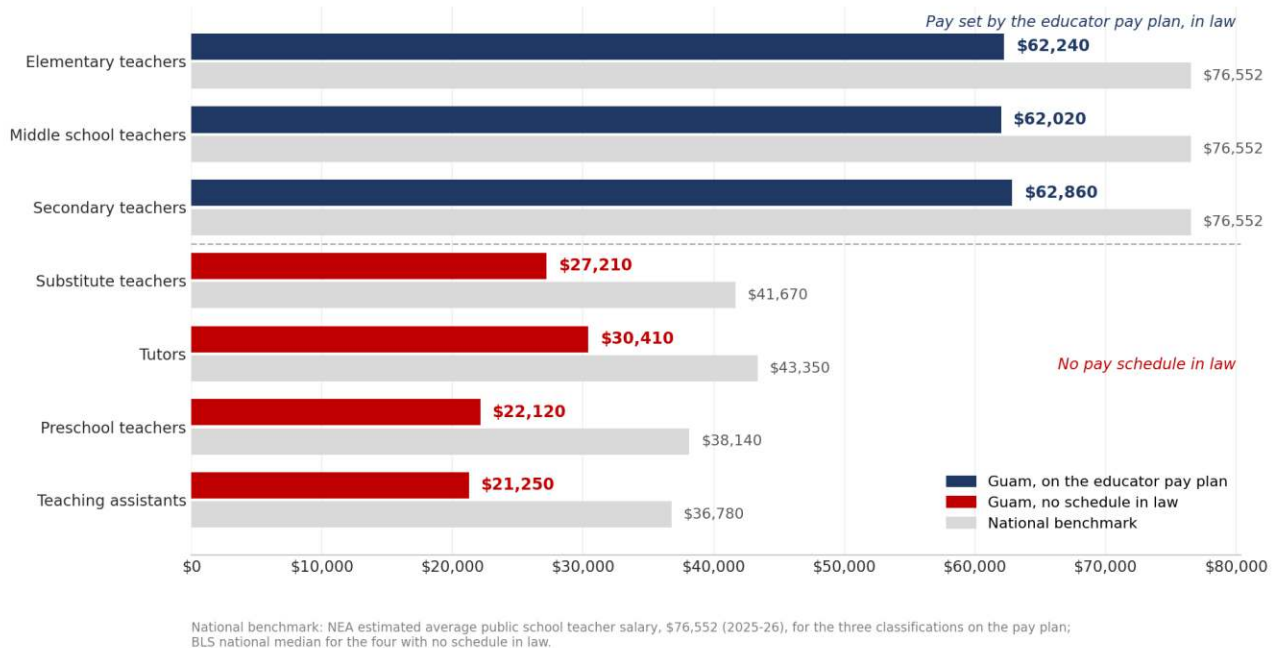
Last of 54

Guam pays education workers a middle wage of \$46,250. That is the lowest of any state or territory in the United States. The national figure is \$60,570.

One group of teachers has a pay schedule in law. The other has none.

This is the most important chart in this document. It splits Guam teachers into two groups: those paid under the educator pay plan set in law, and those with no salary schedule at all. The three classifications on the pay plan are measured against the benchmark the teaching profession uses, the National Education Association estimate of the national average teacher salary, \$76,552 for 2025-26.

**Teachers on the pay plan set in law fall short of the national average.
Teachers with no schedule in law at all are paid the least in the country.**



What this shows

- Guam public school teachers are paid under the educator pay plan, which is written in law. They are paid far better than the rest of the education workforce here, and they are still well short of the national mark. An elementary teacher earns a median of \$62,240 against a national average of \$76,552. That is 81 cents on the dollar.
- Every teaching job on Guam without a schedule in law is at or near the bottom of the country. Teaching assistants and preschool teachers are dead last of all 54 areas.
- GFT understands the low paid classifications to be concentrated in private schools and charter schools on Guam, where no salary schedule is set in law.
- Guam also does not require a classroom teacher in a private or charter school to hold a teaching certificate. A public school teacher must be certified. A private or charter school teacher need not be. GFT is asking for two things: a certification requirement for every person employed as a classroom teacher on this island, and pay that mirrors the public sector schedule once that certificate is held. Neither one works without the other.

Two notes. First, the union holds a collective bargaining agreement for public school teachers but is not permitted to bargain wages. Pay is set by the educator pay plan in law, and only the Legislature and the Governor can change it. It takes a bill and it takes a signature. GFT supplies data and lobbies for updates. Second, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports Guam wages for all employers combined and does not separate public, private and charter schools. The wage figures are federal. The description of

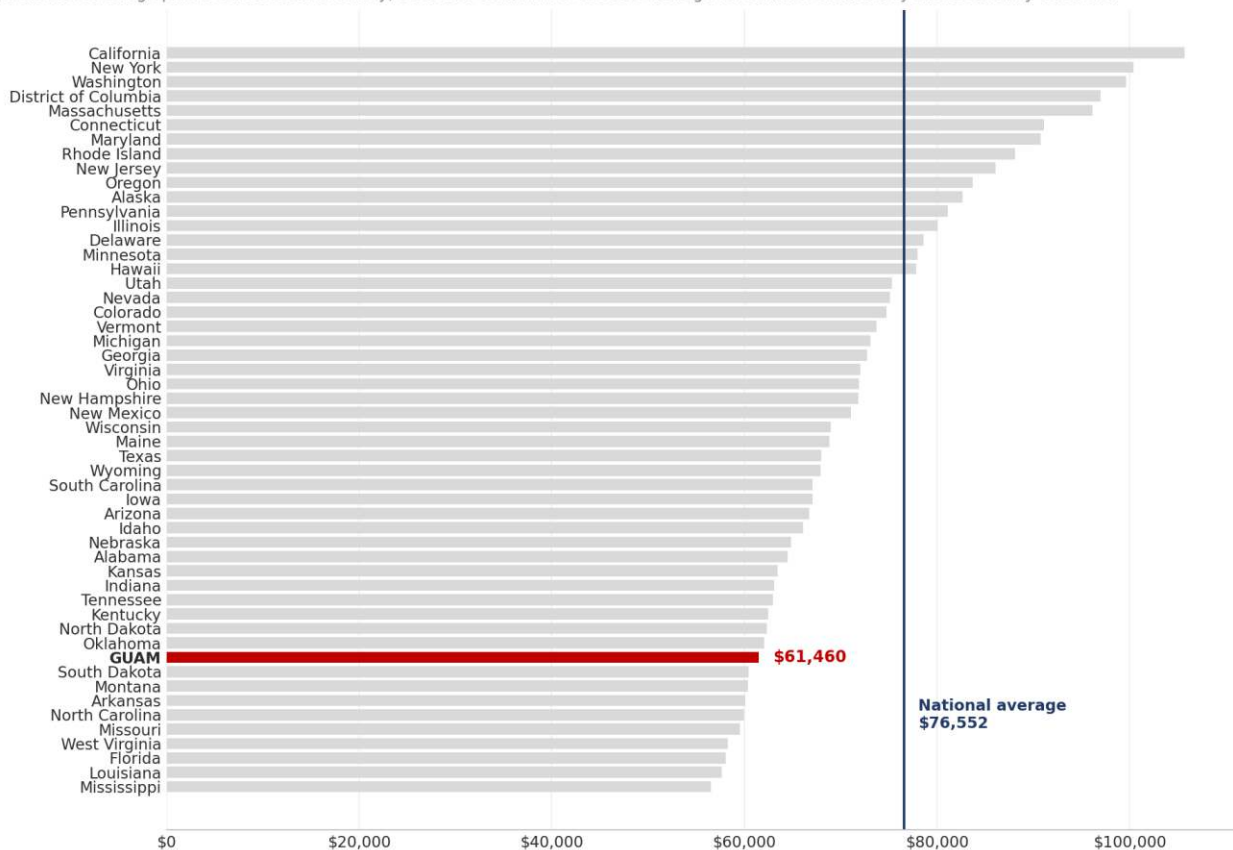
who holds those jobs, and the absence of a certification requirement outside the public system, is GFT knowledge of the local workforce.

Even our certified teachers are not made whole

The National Education Association publishes the average public school teacher salary for every state each year. For 2025-26 the national average is \$76,552. NEA does not include Guam, so we placed Guam in their table using the federal average for our certified elementary and secondary teachers, which is \$61,460.

Guam teachers would rank 43rd of 52 against the NEA state averages

NEA estimated average public school teacher salary, 2025-26. Guam bar is the BLS average for certified elementary and secondary teachers.



80 cents

What a Guam certified teacher earns for every dollar of the national average teacher salary. The shortfall is about \$15,100 a year.

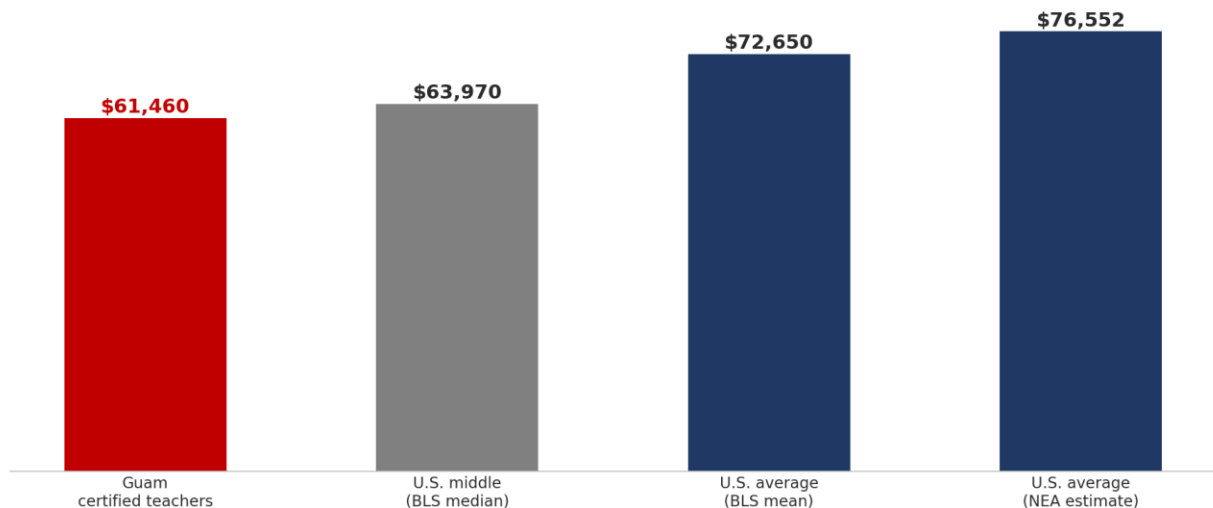
Guam would rank 43rd of 52. Only nine states pay their teachers less than Guam pays ours: Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia.

Why we use the average and not the middle

Someone will point out that against the middle of the range, Guam teachers look closer to the national figure. That is true, and here is why it happens.

The benchmark you choose changes the answer, so this report uses the average

Elementary school teachers. The NEA estimate and the BLS average agree closely. The BLS median is lower because it ignores the top of the pay range.



In most of the country a teacher who stays in the classroom for twenty or thirty years, and who earns a master's degree along the way, finishes far above where they started, and those senior salaries pull the state average above the middle. Nationally the average is \$8,680 higher than the middle.

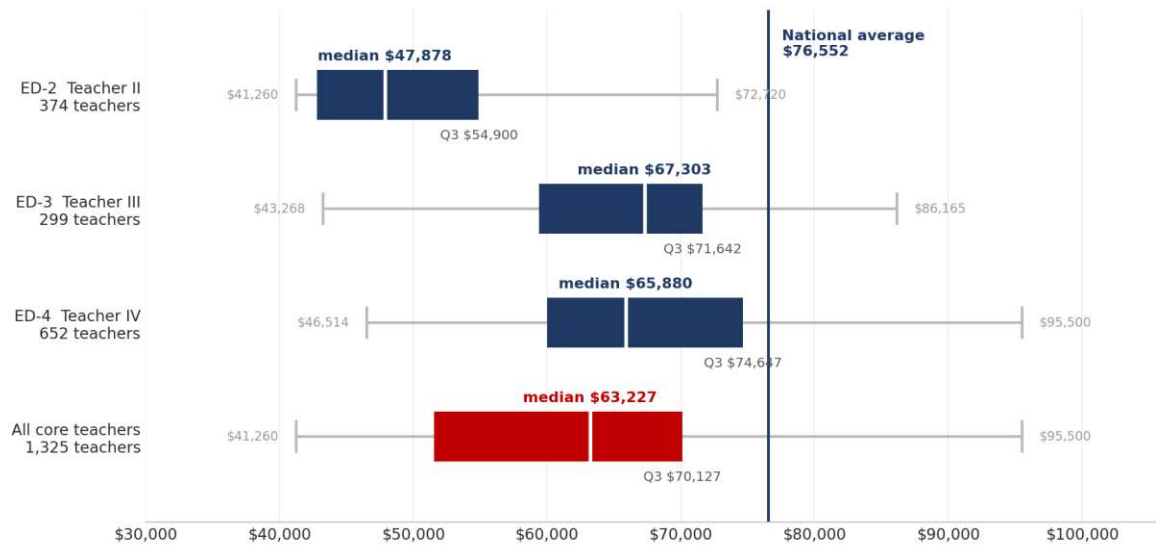
On Guam that does not happen. Our average is \$800 lower than our middle. GFT's own analysis of the Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter pay schedule finds the same thing across all 1,325 core classroom teachers, a mean of \$61,465 against a median of \$63,227, within five dollars of the federal figure. The bottom of our scale is crowded with teachers entering at \$41,260, and the top of it is not high enough to pull the average back up.

Three quarters of our teachers are below the national average

This comes from our own payroll records, not from a survey. Each box below covers the middle half of a pay grade. Every one of them sits to the left of the national average line.

Three quarters of Guam's classroom teachers are paid below the national average

Guam public school core classroom teacher salaries, FY2025 fourth quarter, 1,325 teachers. The box spans the middle half of each grade.



Whiskers run from the lowest to the highest salary actually paid in that grade. The white line is the median. The red bar is all three grades combined. National average is the NEA estimate for 2025-26. Source: GFT analysis of the Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter teacher pay schedule.

ED-4, Teacher IV, is the largest group of classroom teachers on this island, 652 of the 1,325, and it is the grade that holds the master's degrees and the longest service. Its median is \$65,880 and its third quartile is \$74,647. Both are below the national average of \$76,552. Three quarters of our most experienced, master's holding teachers are paid less than the average American teacher. Across all three grades the third quartile is \$70,127, so more than three in four Guam classroom teachers earn below the national average.

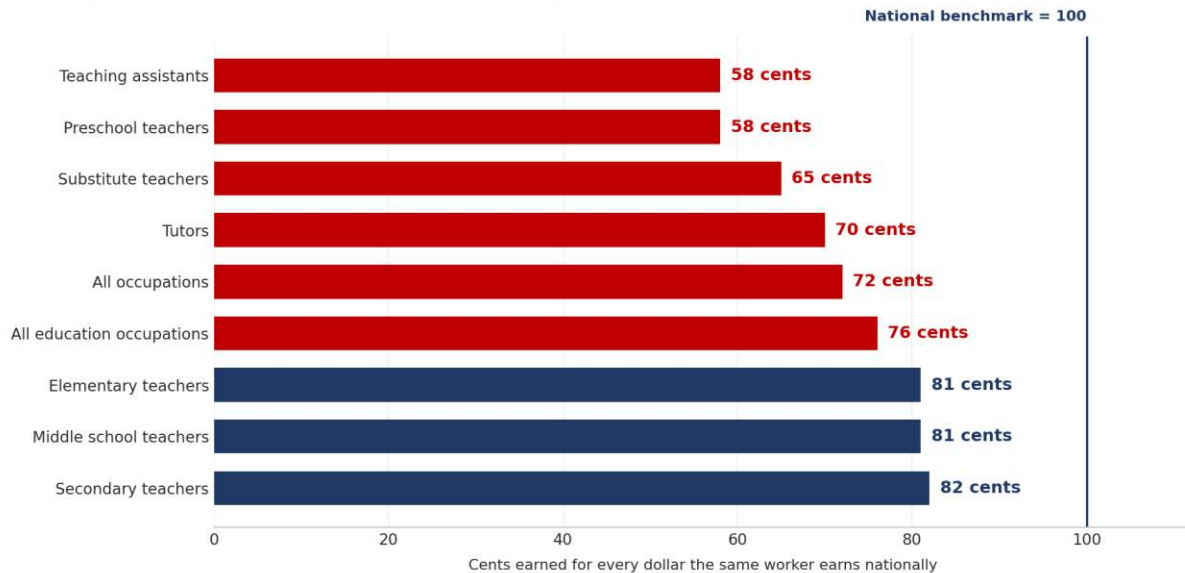
And the gap is widening. When GFT ran this analysis in February 2026 against the national average then in print, \$72,030, the shortfall was \$10,565 a teacher. Our number has not moved. The national average for 2025-26 is \$76,552, so the same Guam salary is now \$15,087 behind. Standing still here is not standing still. The rest of the country is walking away from us.

What a Guam worker takes home

Another way to see the same thing. For every dollar the same work earns nationally, this is what it earns on Guam. Teachers on the pay plan are measured against the NEA national average of \$76,552, the rest against the BLS national median.

What a Guam worker earns for every dollar earned nationally

Guam median against the national benchmark for the same work. Nothing on this island reaches the national mark.



Red bars compare the Guam median with the BLS national median. Navy bars compare the Guam median with the NEA estimated national average public school teacher salary of \$76,552 for 2025-26, the benchmark the teaching profession uses.

A teaching assistant on Guam earns 58 cents for every dollar a teaching assistant earns stateside. A preschool teacher earns 58 cents. Even a public elementary school teacher, on the pay plan written into law, earns 81 cents against the national average.

What we are asking for

The current budget does not address wage disparity in the public sector or the private sector. It does not fund a study of the problem and it does not fund a fix. For public school teachers this is squarely a matter for the Legislature and the Governor, because their pay plan sits in law and cannot be bargained.

Two options

Option one: fund a wage study

Pay for a comprehensive study that establishes what it costs to live and work on Guam, what competitive wages would be, and what closing the gap would cost. This gives the Legislature the number it says it does not have.

Option two: appropriate the money

Skip the study and put the appropriation toward raising wages directly, starting with the classifications that are last in the nation. For core classroom teachers the size of the job is already known. Bringing the ED-2 to ED-4 mean from \$61,465 to between 95 and 100 percent of the national average means a target of roughly \$72,700 to \$76,600 per teacher.

And four changes that keep it from reopening

Index educator pay to national benchmarks, with periodic review against national salary data and the cost of living on Guam and automatic adjustment. A raise that is not indexed only resets the clock.

Commit to a three to five year stabilization plan that reaches parity with the national average, with annual public reporting on recruitment, retention and vacancy rates.

Authorize bargaining over salary. We hold a contract we are not permitted to use on pay. Give us standing to negotiate and you gain a partner in this instead of a petitioner.

Fully fund the Yamashita Educator Corps Scholarship. Guam cannot outbid mainland districts paying \$10,000 to \$20,000 more for the same job, but it can grow its own teachers.

What GFT cannot support is another year of neither.

The last meaningful increase to the educator pay plan took effect in 2022 and delivered a 20 percent base adjustment. It was real and it mattered. The wage data behind it was gathered before the Covid-era inflation that followed, and nothing has moved since. Guam has now spent four years paying its educators under a plan built for a cost of living that no longer exists.

These federal figures are published every year, they are public and they are free. **What has been missing is not information. It is the will to act on it.**

The cost of waiting is already being paid. The Guam Department of Education opens every school year short, with several dozen classroom positions unfilled, and the shortages fall hardest on secondary content courses, the exact posts mainland districts recruit hardest for. Schools cover it with long term substitutes, combined classes and understaffed courses. Meanwhile teachers,

teaching assistants and school staff are leaving Guam for the mainland, for Hawaii, for anywhere that pays what this island will not. They are not leaving because they stopped caring about our children. They are leaving because the arithmetic of raising a family here stopped working.

Paid last in the nation is not a phrase we chose for effect. It is what the federal wage data says about this island in 65 percent of the occupations it measures, and it is what the Government of Guam's own pay schedule says about the people who teach our children.

Fund the study or fund the raises. Choosing neither is itself a choice, and it is the most expensive one in front of you.

Where these numbers come from

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025 release, and National Education Association Rankings and Estimates, April 2026, table E-6, for the national average teacher salary of \$76,552. All industries, all types of employer. BLS wages shown are annual medians and are not adjusted for the cost of living on Guam. Comparison areas for the BLS figures are the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, 54 areas in total. The NEA comparison covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Guam, 52 areas. Where BLS withholds a wage for confidentiality the job is left out of the rankings. Guam wages are withheld for 7 of the 242 jobs BLS reports for the territory, including registered nurses. The pay grade distributions come from GFT's Statistical Analysis of Core Classroom Teacher Salaries, ED-2 through ED-4 Positions, FY25 Fourth Quarter Data, February 2026, built on the Government of Guam FY25 fourth quarter teacher pay schedule. The complete figures are in the GFT full report and in the accompanying data workbook.

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