

## Background

Teacher salaries in Connecticut and nationwide have not kept pace with those of college graduates in other professions.<sup>1</sup> Despite declining K-12 student enrollment, Connecticut is facing a shortage of teachers in key subject areas.<sup>2</sup> Current teacher shortages recently sparked renewed interest among advocates and policymakers in increasing teacher salaries as a means of attracting more people to the teaching profession.

During the Connecticut General Assembly's 2024 regular legislative session, multiple proposals, including S.B. 381 and H.B. 5348, were introduced to establish minimum starting salaries for teachers and paraeducators in hopes of addressing shortages and compensation disparities.<sup>3</sup> Although these legislative initiatives were not enacted, the challenges of teacher shortages and low salaries persist.

However, Connecticut has faced teacher shortages and district pay disparities before, and responded by passing the state's Education Enhancement Act (EEA) in 1986.

## Overview of the Education Enhancement Act

Prior to the EEA, there was no standardized minimum teacher salary in Connecticut. Pay levels varied widely between districts, which contributed to significant disparities, especially in lower-income areas.<sup>4</sup> In 1986, the General Assembly passed the EEA, which aimed to reduce salary disparities by offering districts additional state educational aid as an incentive to meet minimum salary targets, rather than providing direct state funding for teacher pay increases.

The goal of the EEA was to standardize teacher pay across districts by providing funding for a minimum salary of \$20,000 (approximately \$53,033 in 2024 dollars) by the 1988-89 school year and offering additional funds to districts with lower starting salaries.<sup>5</sup> The EEA also included provisions for professional development and created alternative certification pathways for academically high-performing college graduates.<sup>6</sup> These measures sought to address shortages in high-demand areas and improve the overall quality of Connecticut's teaching workforce.

## Education Enhancement Act Funding

The EEA represented a substantial financial investment from the State of Connecticut with over \$300 million in state aid made available from fiscal year 1987 to FY 1989. Of this, \$243 million was designated for programmatic expenditures, including trust funds and direct district allocations. The remaining funds covered administrative costs and other non-programmatic expenditures.<sup>7</sup> The Educational Excellence Trust Fund was allocated

\$89,156,496 for FY 1987, with an additional provision for up to \$100 million from the State's FY 1986 General Fund surplus.<sup>8</sup>

The Act also replaced a prior allocation of \$60 million for salary and staff incentives with \$47,217,352 for salary and general aid, and \$6,000,000 for teacher-pupil ratio aid grants.<sup>9</sup> Additional appropriations included \$50,000 for each of two study committees: one to examine educational funding and another to evaluate the effects of the Act and the feasibility of competency tests and minimum achievement standards.<sup>10</sup> Another \$50,000 was designated for a dropout prevention pilot program.

**Table 1: Education Enhancement Act Funding Summary (Totals for FYs 1987-89)**

Category	Year <sup>A</sup>	Amount
<b>Educational Trust Fund</b>	FY 1987	\$89,156,496
<b>Salary &amp; Aid Allocations</b>	FYs 1987-89	\$47,217,352
<b>Teacher-Pupil Ratio Aid Grants</b>	FYs 1987-89	\$6,000,000
<b>Study Committee: Educational Funding</b>	FYs 1987-89	\$50,000
<b>Study Committee: Effects of the Act</b>	FYs 1987-89	\$50,000
<b>Dropout Prevention Pilot Program</b>	FYs 1987-89	\$50,000

## Effects of the Education Enhancement Act

After the passage of the EEA, teacher's starting pay increased in all but three districts by 1988.<sup>11</sup> Starting teacher salaries increased by an average of \$4,867 from 1987 to 1988 (approximately \$12,941 in 2024 dollars), with the salaries in Meriden, New Haven, and Windham all increasing by over \$10,000 (\$26,590 in 2024 dollars).<sup>12</sup> Anecdotally, a district superintendent noted an increase in higher-quality candidates applying for new teaching positions, and career educators retiring later to take advantage of the increased salary for their pension.<sup>13</sup> Key education stakeholders — including the Connecticut State Department of Education, school district leaders, and education advocates — also claimed the increase in teacher salaries increased Connecticut's competitiveness with other states, and increased the number of college students enrolling in education related classes.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>A</sup> Amounts listed represent totals across all specified fiscal years, not yearly appropriations. For example, the \$89.1 million allocated for the Educational Trust Fund was specifically for FY 1987, while other categories reflect combined totals for FYs 1987-89.

## Education Enhancement Act and the ECS Formula

The EEA was effectively replaced in 1989 by the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula, which ensured towns received no less funding than they had under the previous EEA and Guaranteed Tax Base mechanisms.<sup>15</sup> However, unlike the EEA, the ECS formula did not incentivize minimum teacher salaries, instead leaving decisions about teacher pay to individual districts.<sup>16</sup> These provisions were designed to provide towns with the financial resources necessary to sustain the teacher salary increases introduced by the EEA, while granting districts flexibility in their budgetary decisions.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Allegretto, S. (2024, September 12). Teacher pay rises in 2023—but not enough to shrink pay gap with other college graduates. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2023/>.

<sup>2</sup> Boston University, Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, Wheelock Educational Policy Center. (2023). *Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut State Department of Education. Retrieved from [https://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/WEPC\\_CT\\_Shortage\\_Report\\_January\\_2023.pdf](https://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/WEPC_CT_Shortage_Report_January_2023.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Thymianos, K., & DiMarco, B. (2024, May 27). Legislative Tracker: 2024 Teacher-Pay Bills in the States. *FutureEd*. Retrieved from <https://www.future-ed.org/legislative-tracker-2024-teacher-pay-bills-in-the-states/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, R.A. (1987, August 30). Raises for Teachers Start to Pay Off. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/30/nyregion/raises-for-teachers-start-to-pay-off.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Moran, J.D. (2022). *Overview of the 1986 Education Enhancement Act (2022-R-0032)*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://search.cga.state.ct.us/Highlighter/doc/2a9bf88192debf69c4b8fe410fab749d.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Hamilton, R.A. (1987, August 30). Raises for Teachers Start to Pay Off. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/30/nyregion/raises-for-teachers-start-to-pay-off.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Connecticut General Assembly. (1986). *Summary of Public Act 86-1 (May Special Session): An Act Concerning Education Enhancement*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from <https://cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0032-Attach2-PA%2086-1%20Summary%20May%20Special%20Session.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Hamilton, R.A. (1987, August 30). Raises for Teachers Start to Pay Off. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/30/nyregion/raises-for-teachers-start-to-pay-off.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Connecticut General Assembly. (1988). *Summary of Public Act 88-358: An Act Concerning School Finance*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from <https://cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0032-Attach3-PA%2088-358.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Lohman, J. (2004). *Education Cost Sharing Formula (2004-R-0815)*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2004/rpt/2004-R-0815.htm>.