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# Breaking the Salary Myth

A Comparative Analysis  
of the  
**Montgomery County Public Schools**  
Salary Scale for  
Teachers and Other Professional Educators

March 2008

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## Executive Summary

Perhaps one of the thorniest issues faced each year by a Board of Education is that of employee compensation.

Montgomery County has long prided itself on the quality of its public school system. The schools are routinely praised as the engine of the county's economic growth and well-being. In recent years, the Montgomery County Public Schools have made significant progress, as measured by student test scores. There has been progress both in overall student achievement as well as in closing the achievement gap. There is much work left to be done, but so far the data is overwhelming that MCPS students are succeeding at much higher levels than in the past.

Associated with this pride in the quality of the public school system, has been a belief that the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) paid its professional teaching staff the highest salaries in the area. Yet as this analysis shows, teacher salaries in MCPS are very comparable to those in the other Metro Washington area suburban school districts, and in fact lag behind teacher salaries in leading suburban school districts throughout the northeast.

- Since 1989, there has been little change in the relationship between starting teacher salaries in MCPS and those in the rest of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. suburban school districts. In fact, MCPS starting salaries have dropped in relation to these other school districts on both the Bachelors+15 and Masters salary lanes.
- Similarly, since 1989, there has been little change in the relationship between maximum teacher salaries in MCPS and those in the rest of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. suburban school districts.
- The Maryland State Board of Education continues to document, and officially certify, teacher shortages in virtually all subject areas and grade levels. Amidst a national teacher shortage.. **MCPS is competing with other leading suburban school districts throughout the Washington/New York corridor for the best and brightest college graduates.** More than half of MCPS new hires come from out of state.
- **Today, MCPS offers low starting salaries compared with other leading suburban school districts throughout the Washington/New York corridor.**

The success of today's students in the Montgomery County Public schools is due in large part to the quality of its professional, paraprofessional, and support staffs. It is also a product of the communities' long-standing pride and commitment to funding quality public education.

The success of tomorrow's students depends upon both.

# Starting Salaries

## Comparison of Metro Washington, D.C. Suburban Area Teacher Salary Scales 1989-2008

| <u>1989</u>                      | <u>2008</u>                                  | <u>Changes in MCPS Ranking</u>        |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b><u>BACHELOR</u></b>           |  |                                       |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>25,661</b>  | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>44,200</b>              |                                       |
| Arlington      24,370            | Fairfax      43,911                          | SAME                                  |
| Falls Church      24,370         | Prince George's      43,481                  |                                       |
| Fairfax      24,255              | Falls Church      43,000                     |                                       |
| Alexandria      23,950           | Arlington      42,965                        |                                       |
| Prince George's      23,500      | Alexandria      42,671                       |                                       |
| <b><u>BACHELOR+15</u></b>        |  |                                       |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>25,661</b>  | Fairfax      45,319                          |                                       |
| Arlington      25,618            | Arlington      45,114                        | DROPPED                               |
| Fairfax      25,220              | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>44,200</b>              | (1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) |
| Falls Church      25,101         | Falls Church      44,000                     |                                       |
| Alexandria      24,669           | Prince George's      43,481                  |                                       |
| Prince George's      23,500      | Alexandria      42,671                       |                                       |
| <b><u>BACHELOR+30 (MAEQ)</u></b> |  |                                       |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>27,787</b>  | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>48,693</b>              | SAME                                  |
| Fairfax      25,220              | Falls Church      48,000                     |                                       |
| Prince George's      26,000      | Fairfax      46,747                          |                                       |
| Falls Church      25,832         | Prince George's      45,524                  |                                       |
| Arlington      25,618            | Arlington      45,114                        |                                       |
| Alexandria      24,669           | Alexandria      42,671                       |                                       |
| <b><u>MASTERS</u></b>            |  |                                       |
| Falls Church      29,244         | Fairfax      49,239                          |                                       |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>27,787</b>  | Alexandria      48,943                       | DROPPED                               |
| Prince George's      27,500      | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>48,693</b>              | (2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) |
| Fairfax      27,332              | Falls Church      48,000                     |                                       |
| Alexandria      27,085           | Prince George's      47,663                  |                                       |
| Arlington      26,349            | Arlington      47,370                        |                                       |
| <b><u>MASTERS+30</u></b>         |  |                                       |
| Falls Church      30,219         | Alexandria      51,034                       |                                       |
| Alexandria      29,698           | Fairfax      50,612                          |                                       |
| Prince George's      29,500      | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>50,124</b>              | INCREASED                             |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>28,561</b>  | Falls Church      50,000                     | (4 <sup>th</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) |
| Fairfax      28,478              | Prince George's      49,901                  |                                       |
| Arlington      28,081            | Falls Church      50,000                     |                                       |
| <b><u>PhD</u></b>                |  |                                       |
| Alexandria      31,135           | Prince George's      52,768                  |                                       |
| Prince George's      30,900      | Fairfax      52,591                          |                                       |
| Arlington      30,253            | Arlington      52,225                        | INCREASED                             |
| Falls Church      30,219         | Falls Church      52,000                     | (6 <sup>th</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> ) |
| Fairfax      29,768              | <b>Montgomery</b> <sup>1</sup> <b>51,419</b> |                                       |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>28,561</b>  | Alexandria      51,034                       |                                       |

<sup>1</sup> Montgomery County has an MA+60 salary lane, but no PhD salary lane.

# MAXIMUM SALARIES

## Comparison of Metro Washington DC Suburban Area Teacher Salary Scales 1989-2008

NOTE: In Maryland jurisdictions (Montgomery and Prince George's) teachers must gain their Advanced Professional Certificate within ten years and advance to the BA+30 (masters equivalency) salary lane. They cannot remain in the BA or BA+15 salary lane beyond ten years. As there is no effective maximum salary on these lanes, no comparison is possible.

| <u>1989</u>                     | <u>2008</u>                                  | <u>Changes in MCPS Ranking</u>                     |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <br>                            |  |  |
| <u>BACHELOR+30 (MAEQ)</u>       | <u>BACHELOR+30 (MAEQ)</u>                    |  |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>50,100</b> | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>90,316</b>              |  |
| Fairfax              48,421     | Arlington            85,617                  | SAME   |
| Arlington            47,732     | Fairfax               76,911                 |  |
| Prince George's    41,900       | Prince George's    76,826                    |  |
| Falls Church        41,429      | Alexandria          73,639                   |  |
| Alexandria          40,773      | Falls Church        65,995                   |  |
| <br>                            |  |  |
| <u>MASTERS</u>                  | <u>MASTERS</u>                               |  |
| Arlington            50,270     | Alexandria          88,943                   |  |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>50,100</b> | Arlington            87,965                  | DROPPED<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> )   |
| Fairfax              49,568     | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>87,680</b>              |  |
| Falls Church        47,522      | Falls Church        84,885                   |  |
| Alexandria          45,068      | Fairfax               84,765                 |  |
| Prince George's    43,520       | Prince George's    76,606                    |  |
| <br>                            |  |  |
| <u>MASTERS+30</u>               | <u>MASTERS+30</u>                            |  |
| Arlington            52,709     | Arlington            94,395                  |  |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>51,926</b> | <b>Montgomery</b> <b>94,162</b>              | SAME   |
| Fairfax              50,714     | Alexandria          93,007                   |  |
| Falls Church        48,740      | Falls Church        91,500                   |  |
| Alexandria          48,461      | Fairfax               88,310                 |  |
| Prince George's    45,545       | Prince George's    84,215                    |  |
| <br>                            |  |  |
| <u>PhD</u>                      | <u>PhD</u>                                   |  |
| Arlington            55,197     | Arlington            99,117                  |  |
| Fairfax              52,004     | <b>Montgomery</b> <sup>2</sup> <b>96,528</b> |  |
| <b>Montgomery</b> <b>51,926</b> | Falls Church        94,600                   | INCREASED<br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> ) |
| Alexandria          51,172      | Alexandria          93,007                   |  |
| Falls Church        48,740      | Fairfax               90,289                 |  |
| Prince George's    46,956       | Prince George's    89,054                    |  |

<sup>2</sup> Montgomery County has an MA+60 salary lane, but no PhD salary lane.

# STARTING SALARIES

## Comparison of Regional Suburban Teacher Salary Scales, 2008

### BACHELOR

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 53,455        |
| Summit, NJ                   | 50,360        |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 48,776        |
| Princeton, NJ                | 47,069        |
| Greenwich, CT                | 46,272        |
| Stamford, CT                 | 44,550        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>44,200</b> |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 43,911        |
| Media, PA                    | 42,998        |
| Upper Darby, PA              | 40,725        |

### MASTERS

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 64,412        |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 56,131        |
| Summit, NJ                   | 55,116        |
| Greenwich, CT                | 51,205        |
| Princeton, NJ                | 50,882        |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 49,239        |
| Stamford, CT                 | 48,914        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>48,693</b> |
| Media, PA                    | 47,082        |
| Upper Darby, PA              | 45,250        |

### MASTERS +30

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 67,019        |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 61,242        |
| Summit, NJ                   | 56,347        |
| Princeton, NJ                | 54,130        |
| Greenwich, CT                | 51,205        |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 50,612        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>50,124</b> |
| Stamford, CT                 | 50,083        |
| Media, PA                    | 48,972        |
| Upper Darby, PA              | 46,450        |

### PhD

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                            | 71,471        |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)                 | 68,889        |
| Media, PA                                | 60,557        |
| Greenwich, CT                            | 59,831        |
| Summit, NJ                               | 59,819        |
| Princeton, NJ                            | 56,106        |
| Stamford, CT                             | 54,911        |
| Fairfax, VA                              | 52,591        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD<sup>3</sup></b> | <b>51,419</b> |
| Upper Darby                              | 48,260        |

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<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County has an MA+60 lane, but no PhD salary lane.

# MAXIMUM SALARIES

## Comparison of Regional Suburban Teacher Salary Scales 2008

Note: In Maryland jurisdictions (Montgomery and Prince George's), teachers must gain their Advanced Professional Certificate within ten years and advance to the Masters/(MAEQ) salary lane. They cannot remain in the BA or BA+15 salary lane beyond ten years. As there is no effective maximum salary on these lanes, no comparison is possible.

### MASTERS

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 108,825       |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 102,630       |
| Summit, NJ                   | 96,042        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>90,316</b> |
| Princeton, NJ                | 89,833        |
| Greenwich, CT                | 88,914        |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 86,969        |
| Media, PA                    | 85,751        |
| Upper Darby                  | 84,400        |
| Stamford, CT                 | 80,429        |

### MASTERS +30

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 114,825       |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 107,729       |
| Summit, NY                   | 101,654       |
| Princeton, NJ                | 95,567        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>94,162</b> |
| Greenwich, CT                | 88,914        |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 88,310        |
| Media, PA                    | 87,629        |
| Upper Darby, PA              | 86,500        |
| Stamford, CT                 | 81,600        |

### PhD

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Manhasset, NY                | 125,463       |
| White Plains, NY (06-07)     | 122,205       |
| Summit, NJ                   | 105,532       |
| Greenwich, CT                | 100,880       |
| Princeton, NJ                | 99,058        |
| <b>Montgomery County, MD</b> | <b>96,528</b> |
| Media, PA                    | 96,408        |
| Stamford, CT                 | 93,118        |
| Fairfax, VA                  | 90,289        |
| Upper Darby, PA              | 89,650        |

## Endnote

We have chosen three forms of salary comparisons for the purposes of this study.

The first compares the six contiguous suburban school districts in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. These jurisdictions are similar to Montgomery County either in size or socio-economic profile, or both.

This comparison is also examined over time, to assess how the county's competitive ability to attract and retain high quality educators is changing.

Finally, the Montgomery County Public Schools are compared with nine other leading suburban school districts in the Washington to New York corridor. Selections of comparative systems can be done many ways. In this comparison, comparable socio-economic profiles of the jurisdictions was the criteria.

A new book, published just this year (2008), *The Teaching Penalty: Teacher Pay Losing Ground*, by Sylvia Allegretto, Sean Corcoran, and Lawrence Mishel examined in depth the research on how teacher salaries compare to other comparable professions. The conclusion of their survey of the research was that

***“We have established that public school teachers earn less than similarly educated and experienced professionals and that this disadvantage has grown substantially over the last 10 to 13 years”.***

The debate over the adequacy of salaries for teachers and other professional educators is ongoing. Yet there is a growing consensus that the quality of teaching is one of the primary factors in determining student success. Our ability to attract and retain the very best teachers is an essential building block to the continuing success of our schools and our students.

If we are to have informed decision-making, everyone concerned must consider the underlying facts and examine their own assumptions. As this analysis demonstrates, **it is a myth that Montgomery County teachers are paid better than most other teachers in the area or the region.**