

GCEA

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LOCAL MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE MD BLUEPRINT AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR LOCAL EDUCATORS.

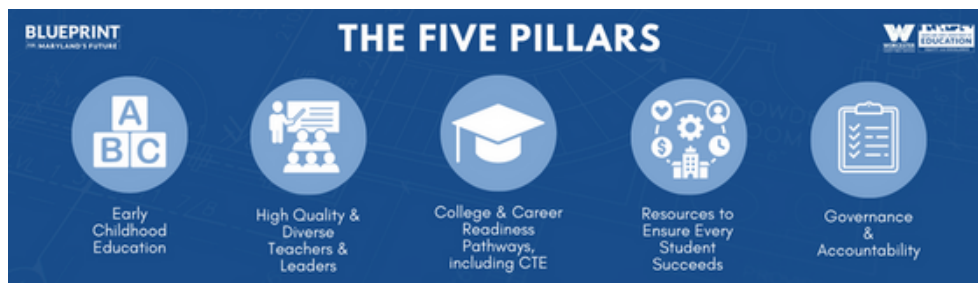


BLUEPRINT
for Maryland's
FUTURE

It seems as though the Maryland Blueprint means something different to everyone. Some Garrett County parents feel it's a catalyst for the proposed closure of beloved schools, while others feel the blueprint will ensure every Garrett County kid gets a world-class education. Misconceptions about the blueprint can have a range of effects on education professionals.

One area where local misconceptions seem to be rife is how the Blueprint will impact teacher salaries in Garrett County, Maryland. Despite the excellent results that Garrett County teachers produce on the MD School Report Card and being held to the same high standards as all Maryland teachers, on average, they earn \$15,000 less than their downstate counterparts.

Unfortunately, social media has become inundated with comments from local residents who fear that raising teacher salaries will bankrupt GCPS and lead to more school closures. These misconceptions have spread like wildfire. It is important for Garrett County teachers and education professionals to understand how the Blueprint will affect salaries in the years to come, while also recognizing that better teacher salaries equate to better student outcomes.



MD BLUEPRINT & GARRETT CO. TEACHERS

The following is a list of important facts surrounding the Blueprint for Maryland's future and its effect on Garrett County teacher salaries:

- Early research by the Kirwan Commission into Maryland's education system uncovered both an **educator shortage** and a **profession (teaching) that wasn't remaining competitive to other careers with similar education and credentials**.
- According to Patch, most Maryland counties pay their teachers \$ 70,000 or more yearly. By contrast the average teacher salary in Garrett County, MD is \$ 55,000.00 yearly, a \$ 15,000 deficit.
- Many Maryland counties have begun offering teacher raises to ramp up to the blueprint's 2026 salary goal, but Garrett County has not taken any such action.
- The Blueprint makes a commitment to build educator salaries and bolster the recruitment of highly credentialed educators, ensuring no starting salary is below \$ 60,000.00 yearly by 2026.
- Starting teacher salaries in Garrett County, MD are currently \$ 43,531.00, a deficit of \$ 16,469 compared to the blueprint promise of \$ 60,000 by 2026.
- At it's core, the blueprint's salary promise **equates to little more than a \$ 16,469 raise** for Garrett County teachers, since it primarily ensures a starting salary of \$ 60,000.00 as opposed to the current \$ 43,531.00.
- It's highly likely Garrett County Teachers will continue to be underpaid compared to their downstate counterparts, even under the MD Blueprint.
- While stipends of up to \$ 17,000 yearly will be available to teachers all across Maryland (including Garrett County) they require National Board Certification, which is an arduous and time consuming process not unlike other advanced professional certifications.
- To earn \$ 100,000 yearly under the blueprint, a Garrett County teacher would likely need advanced tenure, and to be Nationally Board Certified. Even then they may not achieve that salary figure depending on how the Board issues salary increases. The notion Garrett County teachers on average will earn \$100k **IS NOT TRUE.**
- Studies show that higher teacher salaries equate to better student outcomes.
- It is vitally important that administrators are honest about what the blueprint means for teacher salary increases, and that salary increases aren't over-inflated when presenting data to the public, nor insinuations made that teacher salary increases will reduce student funding. **That is simply not true. The Blueprint enhances student funding and teacher salaries!**



COMMON LOCAL MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT INCREASING TEACHER PAY

- **Increasing teacher pay will cause Garrett County Sheriff's Department budgetary cuts.**

In Garrett County, education funding is derived from three main sources: the federal government, state government, and local government. The federal government provides funding for disadvantaged students through programs such as Title 1 and special education resources. The state provides funding based on school enrollment and funding needs, as determined by the state's wealth formula. While the county government contributes a larger portion of the education budget than the state, this is largely due to the county's property tax base skewing the state's wealth formula.

Despite this, it is unclear how the funding from the Blueprint will be allocated and how it will impact teacher salaries. However, it is important to note that increasing local teacher salaries does not necessarily mean cutting county services. It is incorrect to assume that these two things are mutually exclusive. Instead, it is important for the county to prioritize education funding in order to attract and retain high-quality educators who will contribute to the long-term success of the county's schools and its residents. By doing so, the county can create a more equitable future for its students and ensure that its teachers are fairly compensated for their hard work and dedication.

- **GCPS plans to fire teachers and overcrowd classrooms due to the \$60k teacher salary requirement of the Blueprint.**

Garrett County is currently facing a shortage of teachers, rather than an overflow of unneeded educators. As a result, the Blueprint requires the county to ensure that there are ample educators available to serve the entire student population. The idea that GCPS would fire teachers in response to the Blueprint's salary requirements is unfounded.

While Garrett County Public Schools may need to make difficult decisions about how to prioritize funding in order to meet the Blueprint's requirements (which stipulate that 75% of funding must follow the student), losing teachers or overcrowding classrooms would be counterproductive to this goal. It is important to note that the Blueprint's requirements are interconnected, and failing to meet any one of them could jeopardize the county's access to state funding.

For this reason, it is highly unlikely that GCPS would risk violating any of the Blueprint's requirements, including those related to teacher salaries and student funding. Instead, the county must find creative solutions to meet these requirements while also ensuring that its schools have the resources they need to provide a high-quality education to all students. This includes attracting and retaining talented educators through competitive salaries and benefits, while also ensuring that funding is distributed in a way that prioritizes student success.

- **Garrett County Government will raise property taxes in order to fund higher teacher salaries, leading to more residents (and students) leaving, and risking the lake's tourist economy.**

Garrett County currently has one of the highest property tax rates in the state at 1.056%, which is nearly double that of Montgomery County, MD. While it is true that property tax increases can cause some residents to relocate to areas with a lower cost of living, raising property taxes would be unwise for Garrett County. This is because it would exacerbate the already skewed state wealth formula and potentially push the county into further financial distress.

Despite this, Garrett County's annual revenue stands at a healthy 101 million dollars. This suggests that any issues with funding lie with the county's priorities rather than a lack of available resources. In order to meet the goals of the Blueprint, the county must re-evaluate its priorities and ensure that education and educator salaries are a top concern. By doing so, the county can work towards a more equitable future for its residents while also supporting the long-term success of its schools and educators.

THE REALITY



There is a concerning disparity in the way that we view salary increases for different professions in the United States. While professionals such as engineers, accountants, and nurses receive large salary increases with little public or political backlash, the idea of increasing teacher salaries often leads to outrage and claims of budgetary constraints. This mentality has contributed to the underfunding of education and the income disparity between teachers and other professions. In fact, many jobs that require no higher education actually pay better than teaching, with equally enticing benefits.

However, the Blueprint offers hope for addressing these issues. It injects billions into education funding, prioritizes education in all Maryland counties, ensures fair salaries for all teachers, and requires counties to allocate sufficient funding for education. These changes are necessary to address the historical underfunding of education, the lack of prioritization of education, the structure of the education system that awards longevity, and the lack of bargaining power due to being tied to public funding and budgetary restraints.

It is important to recognize that investing in education and increasing teacher salaries is not only beneficial for educators but also for our entire society. Education is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous community, and ensuring that our teachers are well-compensated and supported is essential to this goal. Instead of allowing this income disparity to persist, we must prioritize investing in education and treating our educators with the respect and compensation they deserve.