

# Ashville Citizen-Times

## Easley rolls out increase in N.C. teacher salaries

From Staff and Wire Reports

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RALEIGH — Gov. Mike Easley wants to raise public school teachers' salaries above the national average in 2008, and will give most educators a flat \$600 raise for the rest of the school year as a downpayment toward the goal.

Increasing teacher salaries will improve schools and help retain good teachers, Easley said.

“At the end of the day, we’ve got to do it,” he said. “We’ve got to get these teachers to the national average and beyond.”

Teachers will get the extra pay — \$75 more a month — starting Tuesday, Easley said. The governor said he would then work with the Legislature to give teachers a 5 percent raise over each of the next three years, at a projected annual price tag of \$150 million.

Roger Aiken, a member of the Buncombe County Board of Education and the father of two sons at Erwin High School, said he doesn't believe Easley's plan will do much to slow North Carolina's worsening teacher shortage.

“Obviously I'm glad teachers have gotten a raise,” he said. “But I think that's just a small part of the overall pay scale issues that we are having that are affecting recruiting.”

Aiken said teachers are leaving the profession when they are eligible for retirement after 30 years because their pay scales and retirement benefits can't increase.

“We need about 10,000 new teachers a year (in North Carolina),” Aiken said. “Our university system is only turning out about 3,000 teachers a year, and of those only about 1,800 actually go into the classroom.”

According to the National Education Association, North Carolina teachers on average earned \$43,313 during the 2004-05 school year. The national average was \$47,750.

If the goal is met, teachers in North Carolina would earn an average of \$52,266, during the 2008-09

school year, according to Easley's office.

Staff Writer Clarke Morrison and The Associated Press contributed to this article.

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