

# Public School Teacher Spending on Classroom Supplies

**DATA POINT**  
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The Teacher Questionnaire was administered as part of the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), which is a nationally representative sample survey of public K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This report was revised in 2021 to correct sample weights. For more information, please see <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018097rev>.

Community type is defined by the urban-centric school locale code based on the 2010 Decennial Census data, collapsed into four categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. Instructional level refers to the grade levels taught by a teacher and divides teachers into elementary or secondary based on a combination of the grades taught, main teaching assignment, and the structure of their classes.

## What percentage of teachers spent their own money on classroom supplies during the 2014-15 school year?

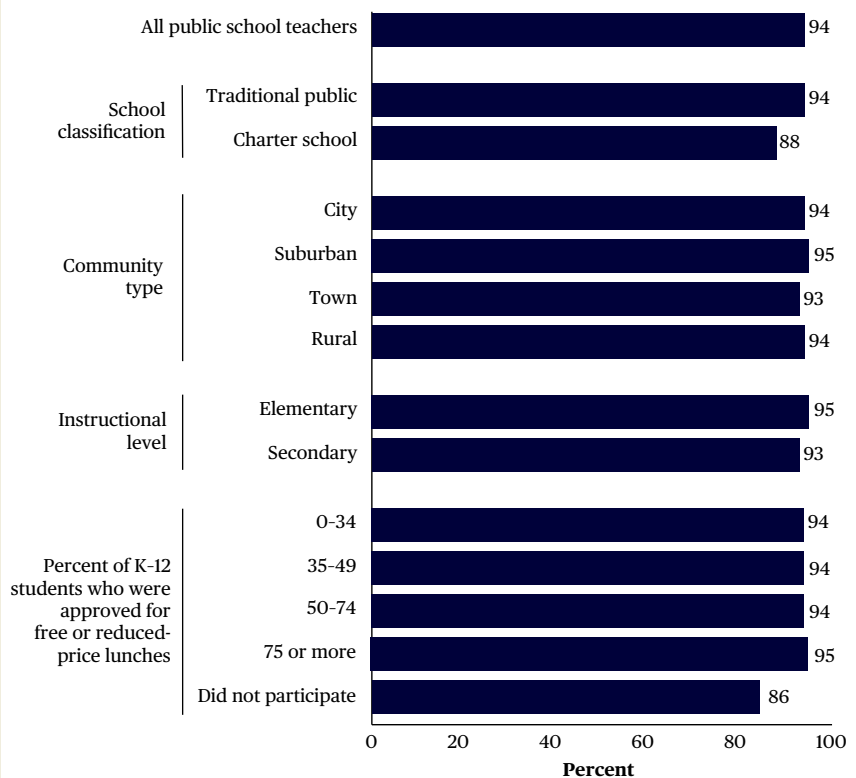
Public school teachers were asked how much of their own money, if any, they spent on classroom supplies without reimbursement during the 2014-15 school year. Overall, 94 percent of teachers spent any money on classroom supplies (**FIGURE 1**).

A higher percentage of teachers in traditional public schools (94 percent) spent their own money on classroom supplies than teachers in public charter schools (88 percent).

A higher percentage of teachers of elementary grade levels (95 percent) spent their own money on classroom supplies than teachers of secondary grades (93 percent).

A lower percentage of teachers at schools that did not participate in the free or reduced-price school lunch program (86 percent) spent their own money on classroom supplies than teachers at schools in which 0-34 percent, 35-49 percent, 50-74 percent, or 75 percent or more of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (94, 94, 94, and 95 percent, respectively).

**FIGURE 1. Percent of public school teachers who spent any of their own money on classroom supplies without reimbursement during the 2014-15 school year, by selected school and teacher characteristics**



NOTE: Interpret data on city teachers with caution. After nonresponse adjustments, the nonresponse bias for this category is greater than for other characteristics.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16.

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**Among teachers who spent their own money on classroom supplies during the 2014-15 school year, how much did they spend?**

Among teachers who spent any of their own money on classroom supplies without reimbursement, the average (mean) amount spent was \$478, and the median amount spent was \$297. About 44 percent spent \$250 or less, while 36 percent spent from \$251 to \$500 (**FIGURE 2**).

A higher percentage of charter school teachers spent \$250 or less (48 percent) than teachers at traditional public schools (44 percent), and a lower percentage spent from \$251 to \$500 (33 percent at charter schools, compared to 36 percent at traditional public schools). There were no significant differences between the percentage of traditional public school and charter school teachers who spent

\$501 to \$750; \$751 to \$1,000; or more than \$1,000.

The average amount spent was higher for teachers at city schools (\$529) than teachers at suburban, town, or rural schools (\$469, \$447, and \$443, respectively). The average amount spent by suburban teachers was higher than spending by town or rural teachers. A higher percentage of city teachers than suburban, town, or rural teachers spent more than \$1,000 (9 percent, compared to 7, 6, and 6 percent, respectively), and a lower percentage spent \$250 or less (40 percent, compared to 45, 44, and 46 percent, respectively).

The average amount spent by teachers of elementary grades (\$525) was higher than the amount spent by teachers of secondary grades (\$430). A higher percentage of teachers of elementary grades spent more than \$1,000 (8 percent

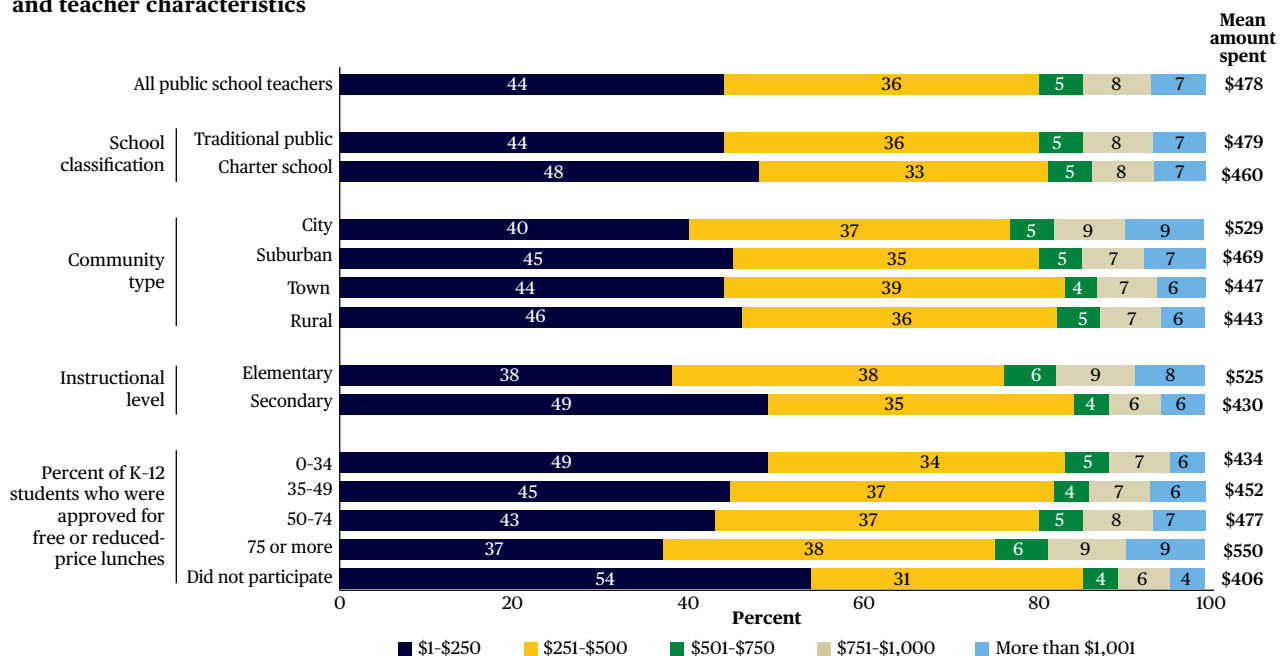
compared to 6 percent), and a lower percentage spent \$250 or less (38 percent compared to 49 percent).

The average amount of \$550 spent by teachers at schools with 75 percent or more eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch was higher than the average amount of \$434 spent by teachers at schools with 0-34 percent eligibility.

At schools at which 75 percent or more of students were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch, a higher percentage of teachers spent more than \$1,000 (9 percent) than teachers at schools with 0-34, 35-49, or 50-74 percent eligibility.

At schools that did not participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program, a lower percentage of teachers spent more than \$1,000 (4 percent) than teachers at schools with any eligibility rate.

**FIGURE 2. Among public school teachers who spent any of their own money on classroom supplies without reimbursement during the 2014-15 school year, mean amount spent and percentage distribution, by selected school and teacher characteristics**



NOTE: Interpret data on city teachers with caution. After nonresponse adjustments, the nonresponse bias for this category is greater than for other characteristics.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16.