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The Average Teacher Spends \$560 Out of Pocket in Supplies

Almost one-in-five teachers spending \$1000+ to make sure their students have essential supplies

Diving into their own pockets to purchase supplies, [books](#), and more for their classrooms is certainly nothing new for American teachers, whether they're in public school or private school classrooms.

But, like just about every other area, inflation is expected to take its toll this fall as teachers begin preparing their classrooms for another school year.

To follow-up on research we've [conducted in previous years](#), we talked to hundreds of U.S. teachers about whether they expect to spend their own money on supplies.

Key findings:

- The average teacher will spend about \$560 out of pocket on their classrooms this year; up from \$511 last year. However, nearly one in four teachers say they'll spend more than \$750 of their own money during the 2022-23 school year.
- On average, elementary school teachers receive about \$11 per student from their schools' budgets, but they spend an additional \$33 out of pocket on each student.
- One in four teachers said their schools didn't allocate any funds for classroom items this year.

Teachers to spend 10 percent more out of pocket this year on classroom supplies

On average, teachers who contribute their own money to their classrooms are planning to spend about \$560 this year. This is an increase of about 10 percent over last year, nearly identical to the overall rate of inflation over the same time period.

How much are teachers spending out-of-pocket on classroom supplies?

Range	2021	2022
\$1 - \$249	24%	27%
\$250 - \$499	29%	30%
\$500 - \$749	21%	20%
\$750 - \$999	11%	6%
\$1000+	14%	17%

Note: Among those who are spending out of pocket

Overall, nine in 10 teachers told us they spend money that's not reimbursed by their school on their classrooms and students, though this was much more common for public school teachers than those working in private schools. Ninety-two percent of public school teachers said they'll spend money this year they won't get back, compared to 73 percent of private school teachers.

And for teachers of younger students, their personal spending per-student dramatically overshadows what their school budgets allow. For kindergarten through fifth grade teachers, the average out-of-pocket spending is expected to be \$33 per student, compared to just \$11 per student provided by their schools.

One in four teachers said their schools didn't allocate any funds for classroom items this year.

Many students come to school without the needed supplies, so teachers help fill the gap

Just under half of teachers told us that supply lists provided to parents include items specifically for classrooms, but only one-quarter of teachers get most of what they need. Of course, parents are also dealing with [higher school supply costs](#), and many of them may have been negatively impacted by the expiration of expanded child tax credits, which expired in December 2021.

The Columbia Center on Poverty and Social Policy [estimated](#) that the tax credits reduced child poverty to the lowest rate on record. That's not to say parents aren't doing what they can. Just over half of teachers said between one- and three-quarters of parents provide all the supplies they ask for.

Teachers spend the most on items like books and [software](#) for their classrooms

While teachers certainly are spending money on items some may consider non-essential, such as [decor](#) and prizes, they're dedicating most money to non-consumable items. This includes books, curriculum, and software – items most people would deem necessities for learning.

Average teacher spending per category

Non-consumable classroom supplies (books, curriculum, and software)	\$95
Prizes and rewards for students	\$92

Average teacher spending per category

Food/snacks for students	\$91
Other/miscellaneous purchases	\$81
Consumable student supplies (pencils, paper, tissues)	\$78
Classroom decor	\$77
Cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer	\$47

The teachers we talked to also planned to spend nearly \$50 on average for cleaning supplies. Though Covid-19 continues to spread cross-country, the cleaning supplies provided by schools may not be sufficient for teachers to keep their classrooms free of germs.

Resources: <https://www.savings.com/insights/teacher-spending-study>