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# How New York Teachers Can Advance Their Salary Through Graduate-Level Credits

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New York is one of the highest-paying states for teachers in the country. According to the National Education Association, the average New York teacher salary was \$98,655 in 2024-25, the second-highest salary in the nation. Salaries vary widely across the state, and one of the main ways teachers move up within their district’s schedule is by earning graduate-level credits. Nearly every New York district rewards continued coursework that advances your teaching practice by providing a permanent increase in base pay.

This article explains how [salary advancement](#) works in New York and walks through examples from Buffalo, White Plains, and Pittsford so you can consider what a lane change is worth over a full career. You’ll also consider how you can maximize your salary over time, while spending the least amount toward credit accumulation, by selecting bundled credit options to satisfy your district requirements for a lane change.

## How Salary Advancement Works in New York

New York does not use a statewide teacher salary schedule. Each of the state’s roughly 700 school districts and 37 BOCES negotiates its own schedule with its local union, most of which are affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), which in turn is affiliated with both the NEA and the AFT. As a result, the specific column names, credit increments, and dollar amounts vary from one district to the next.

|                                                                                            |                                                                                   |                                                                         |                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>\$98,655</b><br>Average New York teacher salary, 2024-25 — second-highest in the nation | <b>~700</b><br>School districts, plus 37 BOCES, each negotiating its own schedule | <b>100</b><br>CTLE hours required in each five-year registration period | <b>15</b><br>CTLE clock hours per semester hour of graduate credit |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|

However, most schedules share the same two-part structure. **Steps** are rows on the schedule tied to years of service, and teachers usually move down one step each year automatically. **Lanes** (also called columns) are tied to education level or additional credits earned, and teachers move across lanes only by earning additional graduate credits or degrees and then submitting transcripts to the district, documenting the earned credits. A common structure for these lanes is segmented from Bachelor’s through Master’s and then Master’s plus 15, 30, 45, or 60 credits, though the exact increments vary by individual districts. New York City uses a different system altogether, with “salary differentials” that require Department of Education-approved credits (see the FAQ below).

## ANATOMY OF A DISTRICT SALARY SCHEDULE

**Two ways to move: down with years, across with credits.**

|                      |          | LANES · CREDITS EARNED → |     |             |       |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----|-------------|-------|
| STEPS · ONE PER YEAR |          | BA                       | MA  | MA+15       | MA+30 |
|                      | Step 1   |                          |     |             |       |
|                      | Step 2   |                          |     |             |       |
|                      | Step 3   |                          | YOU | +15 credits |       |
|                      | Step 4   |                          |     |             |       |
|                      | ...      | ...                      | ... | ...         | ...   |
|                      | Top step |                          |     |             |       |

■ **Steps** are years of service. You move down one row a year without doing anything.

■ **Lanes** are credits. You move across only by earning credits and sending transcripts.

Column names and credit increments differ by district. Darker cells indicate higher pay.

Whatever the structure used by your district, the principle is the same. Graduate-level credits earned after your bachelor's degree often move you to a higher rate of pay, and that higher rate stays with you for the rest of your career, permanently increasing your salary.

## A NOTE ON PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE RENEWAL AND CTLE

**A note on Professional Certificate Renewal and CTLE.** The New York Professional Certificate is valid for life, but teachers must still register with NYSED every five years and complete 100 hours of [Continuing Teacher and Leader Education \(CTLE\)](#) during each five-year registration period. Approved sponsors, like Model Teaching, can provide CTLE credits as an affordable PD-level option. However, graduate coursework can also count toward CTLE credits when the college or university is an [approved CTLE sponsor](#) and awards CTLE hours for the course.

1 semester hour = 15 CTLE clock hours → 7 credits cover 100 hours

Under NYSED's conversion, one semester hour of credit equals 15 CTLE clock hours, so 7 graduate credits would cover the full 100-hour requirement. If you want your graduate-level credits to also count toward CTLE requirements, you want to be certain any credits you choose are provided by a pre-approved sponsor. Otherwise, stick with approved sponsors who offer affordable [100-hour bundle course options](#) to satisfy CTLE requirements.

## Some Example New York Districts

Take a look at a few example New York districts to get an idea of how earning graduate-level credits can increase your salary.

## Buffalo Public Schools

~2,900 teachers

~30,000 students

Buffalo Teachers Federation

10-credit lane increments

[Buffalo Public Schools](#) is the second-largest district in New York State, with roughly 2,900 teachers and about 30,000 students. The [Buffalo Teachers Federation \(BTF\)](#) represents teachers in this district. Buffalo's schedule includes a bachelor's column, a master's column, and columns for Master's +20, Master's +30, and Doctorate, so lane moves above the master's degree come in 10-credit increments.

BUFFALO'S LANES

BA

MA

MA+20

MA+30

Doctorate

Under the most recently reviewed contract, a first-year teacher with a bachelor's degree earned \$48,479 in 2025-26. At the top of the schedule, the columns spread further apart, with a Master's +20 teacher at step 25 earned \$113,417, a Master's +30 teacher earned \$114,784, and a teacher who holds a doctorate earned \$118,019. Bilingual teachers even earn \$1,000 above the regular schedule at every step. So what does this mean? The more years you work in a district, combined with the more education and credits you complete, the greater your salary is.

### BUFFALO · 2025-26 SCHEDULE

#### Top of the schedule (step 25), lanes above the master's degree

|           |           |                 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| MA+20     | \$113,417 | Compared below  |
| MA+30     | \$114,784 | +\$1,367 a year |
| Doctorate | \$118,019 | +\$4,602 a year |

Step 1, bachelor's degree, was \$48,479 in the same year. Bilingual teachers earn \$1,000 above the regular schedule at every step.

## White Plains City School District

~1,300 staff

Westchester County

WPTA, 650+ members

10 lanes, 15-credit increments

[White Plains City School District](#), in Westchester County just north of New York City, employs roughly 1,300 staff, and in this district, the White Plains Teachers' Association (WPTA) represents more than 650 members. White Plains has one of the more comprehensive lane structures in the state, with 10 columns: BA, BA+15, BA+30, MA, MA+15, MA+30, MA+45, MA+60, PhD-Less (doctoral coursework without the degree), and PhD.

WHITE PLAINS' TEN LANES

BA

BA+15

BA+30

MA

MA+15

MA+30

MA+45

MA+60

PhD-Less

PhD

On the 2025-2026 schedule, a first-year teacher earns \$64,207 with a bachelor's degree and \$73,886 with a master's degree, a difference of \$9,679. Each 15-credit move above the master's degree adds about \$3,350 to \$3,370 per year, with a total difference between a bachelor's degree and a PhD in one step at over \$26,000. Then, as you increase in experience, that salary grows more. For example, at step 20, the top of the salary

schedule, a teacher earns \$138,301 with a master's degree, \$145,013 at MA+30, \$156,215 at MA+60, and \$164,067 with a PhD. The WPTA contract covered July 2022 through June 2026, so figures for 2026-27 may differ.

#### WHITE PLAINS · 2025-26 SCHEDULE

##### Step 20, the top of the schedule — what each lane is worth

|       |           |                  |
|-------|-----------|------------------|
| MA    | \$138,301 | Compared below   |
| MA+30 | \$145,013 | +\$6,712 a year  |
| MA+60 | \$156,215 | +\$17,914 a year |
| PhD   | \$164,067 | +\$25,766 a year |

At step 1, the same schedule pays \$64,207 with a bachelor's degree and \$73,886 with a master's, a difference of \$9,679. Bars are scaled from zero; the chips compare each lane with the master's column.

These numbers result in massive increases in your wealth throughout your teaching career. Moving from the master's column to MA+60 adds about \$17,900 per year at the top step. Over 25 years, that difference exceeds \$400,000. Each individual 15-credit move adds roughly \$3,350 per year, or about \$84,000 over 25 years.

**\$17,900**

Added per year moving from MA to MA+60 at the top step

**\$400,000+**

That same difference, over 25 years

**\$84,000**

What one 15-credit move is worth over 25 years

## Pittsford Central School District

~460 teachers

~5,600 students

PDTA

Contract July 2023 – June 2027

Let's take a look at one more school district, which is a bit smaller than the previous two examples. Pittsford Central School District, in Monroe County outside Rochester, serves about 5,600 students with roughly 460 teachers. Teachers are represented by the [Pittsford District Teachers Association \(PDTA\)](#), and the current agreement runs from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2027. Pittsford shows a different approach that is common in upstate New York: instead of wide salary columns, the district pays for graduate credit in smaller blocks.

Graduate credit is paid at \$45 per graduate hour, in blocks of six credit hours, up to a maximum of 90 credit hours. A six-credit block therefore adds \$270 to base salary, and the full 90 hours adds \$4,050 to the yearly salary. Remember, this is the additional salary a teacher receives per year, so your investment in credits accumulated pays for itself over a short period of time. In this district, a graduate degree also adds \$1,935, and earning your National Board Certification adds \$1,000 per year.

**PITTSFORD · PAID PER CREDIT, NOT PER LANE**

$$\begin{array}{c} \$45 \\ \text{per graduate hour} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} 6 \\ \text{credit-hour block} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \$270 \\ \text{added to base pay, per year} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} 90 \\ \text{credit-hour maximum} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \$4,050 \\ \text{added to base pay, per year} \end{array}$$

+ \$1,935 a year for a graduate degree.

+ \$1,000 a year for National Board Certification.

The per-credit approach produces smaller annual amounts than other districts, but they still accumulate over time, and it is absolutely worth taking advantage of. For example, completing the full 90 credit hours adds \$4,050 per year, or about \$100,000 over 25 years, and the graduate degree adds another \$1,935 per year.

## The Value of Early Lane Changes

Earning credits early on in your teaching career produces the best return, because more years are paid at the higher rate. There is also a retirement benefit. Pensions from the [New York State Teachers' Retirement System](#) are based on a final average salary, which for most current members is the highest three consecutive years of your salary. This means that a higher lane in the final years of your career raises your overall average and increases the pension you receive at retirement for life.

Because graduate-level credits are relatively inexpensive compared with the annual increase in salary they produce, a lane change investment typically pays for itself within the first year or two in most districts.

## How Model Teaching Helps New York Teachers Advance

[Model Teaching](#) offers graduate-level credit courses through regionally accredited university partners, including Southern New Hampshire University, University of the Pacific, Augustana University, University of Massachusetts Global, and Valley City State University. Each course is fully online and self-paced, and each comes with a letter grade and an official transcript.

### 1 Need 15 credits to move one column, such as MA to MA+15 or MA+15 to MA+30?

The 15-credit [Build Your Own Credit Bundle](#) covers a single lane change in districts like Syosset and White Plains that use 15-credit columns.

### 2 Need 30 credits for a larger move, such as BA to BA+30 or MA to MA+30?

The 30-credit [Build Your Own Credit Bundle](#) is the most cost-effective option for teachers who want to make multiple lane changes, or who need the full 30 credits for a district's master's-plus-30 lane.

### 3 Need a custom number of credits?

Districts that use 10-credit columns (like Buffalo) or that pay per block of three or six hours (like Pittsford, Niskayuna, or Williamsville) may require different credit bundle options. Model Teaching offers [custom bundles](#) for any number of credits, up to 45.

### 4 Want a master's degree along with your lane change?

Up to 9 Model Teaching credits can be applied toward Augustana University's Master of Education (M.Ed.), so credits that trigger a lane change now can also count toward the master's column later, if you decide to transfer your 9 credits into Augustana's Master of Education program.

#### CHECK THIS FIRST

**A note on prior approval.** Several New York contracts, including districts like Syosset and Pittsford, require a prior approval form before a course begins in order for the credits to count toward salary advancement. Contact your district to receive pre-approval on your graduate-level credit courses.

#### Explore Model Teaching's Graduate Credit Bundles

Regionally accredited university partners

Fully online and self-paced

Letter grade and official transcript

Bundles for 15, 30, or a custom credit count

[Build your own graduate-level credit bundle](#) · [modelteaching.com/professional-development/build-your-own-graduate-level-credit-course-bundle](https://modelteaching.com/professional-development/build-your-own-graduate-level-credit-course-bundle)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a teacher salary lane change in New York?

A lane change is a permanent increase in base pay earned by accumulating graduate credits or completing a higher degree. Most New York districts place teachers in columns such as BA, MA, MA+15, MA+30, and beyond, and each move to a higher column will increase your pay at every step for the rest of your career.

### Will my New York district accept Model Teaching credits for a lane change?

Most New York districts accept graduate-level credits from regionally accredited colleges and universities, and all of Model Teaching's university partners are regionally accredited. Because every district negotiates its own contract, some require pre-approval of coursework or limit credits to certain subject areas. You should always confirm the process and your selected courses with your district HR office or union representative before you begin.

### What about New York City teachers?

The New York City Department of Education uses a salary differential system rather than lanes, and its differentials require credits approved by the DOE, including P credits earned through the After School Professional Development Program and A+ credits. Model Teaching does not currently participate in the program to provide P credits, so this article does not cover NYC. NYC teachers should contact the DOE Office of Salary Services for guidance on their differentials.

## Will Model Teaching credits count toward New York CTLE requirements?

Model Teaching is a NYSED-approved CTLE sponsor, and so you do not need to take graduate-level credits when completing your [CTLE requirements](#). All PD-level courses with Model Teaching are pre-approved through NYSED to provide CTLE credits, including your language acquisition requirement. Completing all CTLE requirements through Model Teaching can save you money when you purchase our [100-hour bundle pack](#).

## How many credits do I need for a lane change in New York?

It depends on your district. Check your district's salary schedule and collective bargaining agreement for the exact requirement.

## When should I submit my transcript to my district?

Most New York districts set an effective date of September 1 with a transcript deadline in October or November, and many add a second effective date of February 1. Check with your district, and complete your credits well before your transcript deadline to ensure your transcript is sent on time. We recommend completing and paying for your credits for transcript processing one month prior to your deadline.

## Do I need a master's degree to reach the top of the schedule?

In most New York districts, the master's degree is required to move from the bachelor's columns into the master's columns, and that jump is often the largest one on the schedule. If a master's degree is part of your plan, up to 9 Model Teaching credits may be applied toward Augustana University's M.Ed.

## What if I work for a BOCES?

BOCES teachers follow the salary schedule in their own bargaining unit's contract, which usually includes annual steps and credit-based advancement but may differ from the schedules of component districts. Confirm the column structure, submission deadlines, and any pre-approval requirements with your BOCES HR office before starting coursework.

## About This Article

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Model Teaching publishes this guidance to help New York educators plan their own salary advancement. District salary schedules are negotiated locally and change with each contract, so the figures above reflect the schedules and agreements reviewed as of September 11, 2026. Always confirm current amounts and submission requirements with your district.

## References

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