



Merit pay for teachers misses the real problem

Here is the real problem and its several inter-related parts:

- Virtually all of Texas' 350,000-plus schoolteachers are underpaid
- Thirty-nine percent are so underpaid that they have to take extra jobs during the school year to meet their families' needs
- Their modest salaries are further eroded by rising health care premiums, now averaging well over \$300 per month
- The state of Texas underfunds public education so badly that these teachers, on average, spend \$738 a year on classroom supplies for which they are not reimbursed
- Even after pay raises made possible by House Bill 3, the average teacher pay in Texas still lags more than \$6,500 behind the national average, and almost one-third of new Texas teachers leave the profession by their fifth year
- Every school child deserves a high-quality, effective teacher, but hundreds of effective teachers are leaving Texas classrooms every year for more financially rewarding professions. And these departing teachers would have become even more effective if they had been paid enough to stay
- The exodus of teachers is a waste of money — every teacher lost due to underfunding costs an additional \$20,000 in training and preparation

Like everyone else, teachers can't pay the rent or mortgage or the grocery bill on dedication alone. But singling out a handful of teachers for "merit" pay is not going to solve the problem.

"Merit" pay, as implemented by the Teacher Incentive Allotment, doesn't even measure merit. It measures a teacher's ability to teach to the test and jump through other data-driven hoops.

The best way to keep effective and soon-to-be-even-more effective teachers in the classroom is through differentiated pay that recognizes advanced education and professional development and to raise teacher pay in Texas to the national average.

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION • www.tsta.org • 877-ASK-TSTA

