



ADDRESSING THE TEXAS TEACHER SHORTAGE CRISIS

Classroom teachers are the single most important in-school factor impacting student outcomes. However, a surge in the demand for teachers alongside a diminishing supply of teachers entering the profession and an increasing rate of teachers leaving has resulted in a teacher staffing crisis. This trend, which has been steady for many years, has become even more alarming in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The official teacher attrition rate in Texas for this school year is 11.57 percent. This is more than a two-point jump reported for the 2020-21 school year, and it is the largest attrition percentage the state has seen since 2007-08. The attrition number includes teachers who transferred from one district to another and are still teaching, but the data underscore the systemic upset that Texas public schools are facing and experts anticipate next year's numbers to be even worse. This is due in part to the aftershock of the pandemic and is not unique to education, but this doesn't change the fact that students across our state are sitting in overcrowded classrooms as a result.

As Texas moves forward with efforts to strengthen its educational system, elevating the status of the teaching profession must remain a top priority. To do this, we must improve the quality of educator preparation, especially for alternative certification programs. We must provide quality induction supports for all new teachers. We must improve working conditions for teachers and center classroom and school-level decisions around their professional input and insights. And it is imperative that we offer educators competitive compensation packages that reward experience, advanced trainings, and leadership roles and that are not based on high-stakes test scores.

It is incumbent upon Texas leadership to begin listening to the individuals who are walking out the door, because the answer to the question about what needs to change is much less difficult to come by than the will to act.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND SUPPORT FOR NEW TEACHERS

Young people are increasingly less interested in becoming teachers, and one third of those who do pursue careers in education leave the profession by their fifth year. Many factors contribute to this trend, but studies show that high-quality preparation and strong systems of support for early-career educators will dramatically increase teacher retention.

CHALLENGE

- Inadequate pay and lack of respect for teachers has caused fewer young people to enter the profession
 - 20% fewer initial certificates are being issued today than a decade ago, despite growing student-age population
- The process to become an SBEC-approved educator preparation program in Texas is not sufficiently rigorous, and low-performing entities can continue to admit new candidates
- The majority teachers are certified by for-profit alternative certification programs, and teachers from these programs have much lower retention rates than ones who receive their certifications from university-based programs
 - If teachers prepared in alternative certification programs were retained at the same rate as teachers prepared in traditional programs, over 3700 fewer new teachers would have been needed last year
- Novice teachers leave the profession in large numbers, with a disproportionate impact on low-income students of color

RECOMMENDATION

- *Support research-based programs and practices proven to recruit diverse candidates into the field*
 - *Provide scholarships and loan forgiveness programs*
 - *Create local pathways into the profession, such as high school career pathways and grow-your-own teacher preparation models*
- *Elevate the standards required for an entity to be an approved as an educator preparation program and increase the transparency of the process*
- *Enhance Texas teacher preparation program curriculum with research-based improvements, including requiring more field-based experiences*
 - *TSTA, alongside a diverse set of stakeholders and experts across the educator pipeline, recommends making performance assessment a curricular requirement in Chapter 228.30 prior to recommending a standard, intern or probationary certification.*
- *Bolster supports for all first-year teachers, including a reduced schedule, extra classroom assistance and mentor programs*

WORKING CONDITIONS

The success of retaining teachers by providing effective preparation and induction supports can be enhanced when teachers work in collaborative and supportive environments. Teachers regularly cite the following factors as among the most important in their assessment of working conditions: opportunities for professional collaboration and shared decision-making; resources for teaching and learning; high-stakes accountability systems. Research has long shown that teachers' working conditions affect their ability to teach well, and if teachers are unable to teach well then student outcomes will be directly impacted.

CHALLENGE

- Teachers have increasingly less autonomy in curriculum selection and instructional practices
- Teachers have limited opportunities to grow in their careers without having to leave the classroom
- There are insufficient resources and campus-based personnel to support teachers, including curriculum experts, counselors and other mental health experts, and paraprofessionals
 - Texas has **one school counselor per 410 students** (the recommended ratio is 1:250)
 - Texas has **one school psychologist for every 4,962 students** (the recommended ratio is 1:500)
 - Texas has **one school social worker for every 13,604 students** (the recommended ratio is 1:250)
- Recent legislation is adding to an already burdensome workload
 - HB 4545 (87-R) is a one-size-fits-few solution to the complex challenge of meeting students where they are
 - HB 3 (86-R) Reading Academies are taking educators extensive hours of work outside the workday, oftentimes without adequate coaching supports or compensation
 - SB 3 (87-R) requirements have caused a chilling effect on teachers in all content areas

- The Texas system of assessment and accountability overemphasizes test results and then uses these results to stigmatize and punish rather than identify needed supports
- Four of every 10 teachers report needing second jobs to supplement their family expenses, and increasing numbers must work summers—a time that should be reserved for planning and preparation—to make ends meet

RECOMMENDATION

- *Create opportunities for shared decision-making and increase and preserve time in the schedule for planning and professional collaboration*
- *Create and reward pathways for teacher-leader roles*
- *Maintain latitude to self-select professional development opportunities*
- *Adequately fund personnel such that teachers can collaborate with teams of professionals, including mental health experts, curriculum experts and paraprofessionals*
- *Lower the stakes of the STAAR test and decouple standardized test results and educator evaluations*
- *Use accountability data to provide targeted, research-based support to schools that have been proven to improve student outcomes, such as community schools*

COMPENSATION

While it's true that the best teachers are drawn to the profession for reasons other than compensation, many Texas teachers can no longer afford not to quit. According to data from the 2021-22 school year, the average teacher salary trails the national average, teachers are at a substantial competitive disadvantage relative to other comparably educated individuals, and Texas ranks 43rd in the nation for average top salary. Competitive teacher compensation is an important part of the solution to recruit and retain a strong and diverse workforce, but Texas teachers see little benefit to an extended career in education.

CHALLENGE

- Texas is ranked 26th in average teacher salary
 - Texas average salary for all teachers for the current 2021-22 school year is \$58,887
 - This trails the national average by \$7,510
- When adjusted for inflation, Texas teachers are making 1.54% less than they were in the 2012-13 school year
- Texas is ranked 14th in the country in average starting pay for educators
 - The average starting salary for first-year teachers is \$2,757 more than the national average, but one-third or more of those starting teachers will be gone from Texas classrooms after five years as their pay falls farther behind their needs
- Texas is ranked 43rd in top salaries for veteran educators, meaning our experienced educators see little benefit to extended careers in education
 - The average maximum salary for Texas teachers lags \$12,867 behind the national average
- Texas teachers are not rewarded for advanced degrees and training relative to other states
 - In Texas, the average difference between new teachers with a master's degree and no prior experience and a bachelor's degree and no prior experience is 2.6%. Across the rest of the US, new teachers with masters earned, on average, 9.5% in additional compensation.
- Texas is ranked 35th in teacher wage competitiveness
 - Texas teachers have a 21.9% pay penalty relative to other college-educated workers in the state, placing them at a substantial competitive disadvantage with comparably educated and skilled workers in the state
 - This is several points higher than the national pay penalty
- Texas teacher salary concerns are exacerbated for teachers with student debt
 - This intersects with efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the educator workforce, as Black and Hispanic teachers hold more debt than their white peers, and Black teachers in particular express challenges with loan repayment

RECOMMENDATION

- *Texas teachers should receive an across-the-board pay raise*
- *Minimum salary schedules must recognize longevity in the profession through meaningful annual pay increases*
- *Pay increases should automatically adjust for inflation as the teacher moves up a step*
- *Pay should be differentiated for teachers who pursue advanced degrees, advanced trainings, and teacher-leader rolls and duties*
- *The state should offer scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for teachers*