



TSTA NEWS

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Morale among Texas teachers remains low. Survey shows almost two-thirds of TSTA teacher-members were seriously considering quitting as school ended last spring.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of teacher-members surveyed for the Texas State Teachers Association said they were seriously considering leaving the profession as the 2023-24 school year was coming to an end last spring. The percentage was lower than the record 70 percent who expressed similar sentiments two years earlier, but it strongly indicates that teachers' unhappiness with the political climate toward public education in Texas remains critical.

"I don't know how many of these teachers actually quit or retired early because their responses were anonymous," said TSTA President Ovidia Molina. "But I fear many of them have left the classroom or will be leaving the classroom soon if our state leaders don't start supporting public education and educators and stop making political attacks against schools."

"Gov. Greg Abbott and his legislative allies have spent several years undermining the morale and reputations of teachers with inadequate school funding, proposed book bans, attacks on classroom diversity and laws imposing political restrictions on what teachers can teach," Molina added.

The biennial teacher moonlighting and morale survey, conducted for TSTA by faculty at Sam Houston State University, has been tracking the concerns of Texas Teachers for more than 40 years. The past two surveys, conducted this year and in 2022, found the highest-ever percentages of teachers who were seriously considering leaving education for other jobs.

This new survey follows a year (2023) in which the Legislature, despite a record \$33 billion budget surplus, failed to increase state funding for education or raise educator pay after Abbott had made it clear he wouldn't approve a funding bill without a voucher plan diverting millions of tax dollars to private schools. TSTA and other public education advocates fought against the voucher scheme, which died in the Texas House.

Abbott has vowed to ram the tax giveaway for private schools through the Legislature next year, even though Texas spends less per public school student than most states and teacher pay trails the national average by more than \$9,000, the largest salary gap for Texas teachers in recent memory.

Teachers responding to TSTA's survey were paid an average of \$62,553, slightly more than the average Texas teacher salary of \$62,463, as estimated by the National Education Association for the 2023-24 school year. NEA estimated the national average teacher salary at \$71,699, based on data from the states.

One-third (33 percent) of the surveyed teachers said they also took extra jobs during the school year to make financial ends meet for their families. They spent on average 13.5 hours a week on their moonlighting jobs, while spending the same number of hours outside the classroom each week on school-related work.

Seventy-four percent of the moonlighters believed their extra jobs hurt the quality of their teaching but that the additional income was necessary. Fifty-two percent of the teachers had summer jobs.

Thirty-six percent of the surveyed teachers disagreed, and 51 percent strongly disagreed with the suggestion that legislators and other state leaders have a positive opinion of them. Only four percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Thirty-eight percent disagreed, and 19 percent strongly disagreed that the public has a positive opinion of teachers. Twenty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Teachers spent an average of \$856 out of pocket a year for school supplies and \$405 a month on health insurance.

Eighty percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that a student examination should be part of a teacher's evaluation.

The online survey of 840 teacher-members of TSTA was conducted in the late spring and early summer. It is part of an academic longitudinal study begun at Sam Houston State in 1980. Surveys normally are taken every two years. No survey was conducted in 2020 because of COVID.

Teachers surveyed were from all grade levels and represented urban, suburban and rural school districts. Their average classroom experience was 16.7 years.