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TSTA survey: Pay raises enacted in 2025 show little impact on teacher moonlighting, morale

One year after the Legislature enacted pay raises for most Texas teachers, 63 percent of teacher-members surveyed for the Texas State Teachers Association said they were seriously considering leaving the profession. This was only slightly less than the 65 percent who were seriously thinking about leaving the classroom when a similar survey was conducted in 2024 – before the 2025 pay increases.

The most recent survey, conducted for TSTA this past spring by faculty at Sam Houston State University, also showed that 33 percent of the respondents had to take extra jobs during the school year to meet their families' needs. This was the same percentage who reported moonlighting two years ago – also before the statewide raises were enacted.

"These numbers reaffirm what we already knew. The overdue teacher raises provided by lawmakers in 2025 were inadequate and did little, if anything, to raise teachers' morale or encourage them to continue teaching," TSTA President Linda Estrada said.

"I don't know how many teachers have resigned or retired since last spring. But teachers who are still in the classroom this fall are there despite their inadequate pay. They are there because they are dedicated to their students' success."

The 2025 raises the Legislature provided for teachers with three or more years' experience helped increase the average teacher pay in Texas by more than $4,000 a year. But Texas teachers were so far behind their peers in most other states that they still trail the national average in pay by more than $8,500, according to the National Education Association's annual survey of state financial contributions to public education.

The average teacher salary in Texas was $68,000 last year. The national average was more than $76,500.

According to the TSTA survey, teachers who moonlighted during the school year spent, on average, 22 hours a week on the extra jobs. And 79 percent of the moonlighters believed their second jobs harmed the quality of their teaching.

Fifty-six percent also reported having summer jobs.

Only about one-third of the survey's 512 respondents answered questions about the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), a form of merit pay based largely on test scores. Seventy percent of those who responded said their districts received grant funding through TIA, but 67 percent said they haven't received a pay boost through the program.

On other issues, the teachers overwhelmingly (94 percent) opposed promotions being determined by student scores on a single exam, and 77 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that student test scores be part of a teacher's evaluation.

Teachers reported spending an average of $841 a year on school supplies for which they were not reimbursed and $409 per month out of pocket on health insurance.

Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the public has a positive opinion about teachers, and 87 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that legislators and other state leaders have a positive opinion about them.

The online survey of 512 teacher-members of TSTA was conducted last spring at the end of the 2025-26 school year. It is part of an academic longitudinal study begun at Sam Houston State in 1980. Surveys normally are taken every two years.

Teachers surveyed were from all grade levels and represented urban, suburban and rural school districts. Their average classroom experience was 17.7 years. Sixty-one percent were the major income earners for their households.