

Kirbyville, TX
East Texas Banner
Circ. 2952

DEC - 4 2002

Teacher shortage only a myth

--- Pay not the issue according to teachers who leave the classroom

Despite the rhetoric and headlines, there is not a teacher shortage and an across-the-board pay raise will not address problems in Texas schools, according to a report issued recently by the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

"There is no teacher shortage, it is a myth," said Chris Patterson, the foundation's director of education policy. "A Texas A&M study found that school districts employed more than the anticipated number of teachers needed in the 2001-2002 school year. There is, however, a shortage of qualified teachers in certain subject areas, but pay is not the problem," Patterson said.

While it is true 60 percent of teachers quit the profession after five years, the pay issue is a myth. According to the Texas Teachers Association, 60 percent of those who leave do so because of a lack of student discipline, 54 percent because of working conditions, and 38 percent because of paperwork. Less than 25 percent say they left the profession because of pay.

"Let's put aside the dire warnings and deal with the facts: an across-the-board pay raise will do nothing to ensure kids have qualified teachers," said Patterson. "There are many teachers who want to teach, but have left the profession because they are fed-up with the working conditions."

Mrs. Patterson's report shatters many teacher pay myths. The surprising facts, found in an American Federation of Teachers study, include:

- Texas already pays starting teachers above the national average;

- Average Texas teacher pay ranks above the nation when adjusting for cost-of-living;

- Texas teachers are paid better than their colleagues in neighboring states;

- Texas has increased salaries 36.5 percent since 1990 - the national increase is 31.5 percent; and

- Almost 41 percent of Texas' total education spending goes to teacher pay.

Among Mrs. Patterson's recommendations for teacher pay include:

- Establish a special salary schedule

and fund special pay stipends for the specific areas where there is a shortage of qualified teachers;

- Establish performance-based pay that rewards performance and employment longevity; and

- Create benefit incentives for teachers who remain in a school district for 10, 20, and 30 years (such as lower health insurance fees and college scholarships for children).

The full paper is available at the Texas Public Policy Foundation web site at www.tppf.org.