

EIGHT FACTS ABOUT TEACHER PAY AND TEACHER RETENTION IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teacher Supply

- ★ **Fact 1:** There is no overall teacher shortage in Texas at this time. Although a shortage was predicted for the 2001-2002 school year, districts actually employed more than the number of teachers that they anticipated would be needed. (*Teacher Demand Study 2001-2002*, Institute for School-University Partnerships, Texas A&M, College Station, 2002.)
- ★ **Fact 2:** There is, however, a shortage of qualified teachers in certain subjects and in specific demographic areas. In large urban school districts, over 30 percent of classes in the following subjects are taught by teachers who are certified – but not certified to teach the subject they are teaching: elementary bilingual/ESL, secondary math, elementary and secondary special education, secondary science, and secondary foreign language. (*Teacher Demand Study 2001-2002*.)

Teacher Retention

- ★ **Fact 3:** The most critical problem in teacher employment, however, pertains to teacher retention. After five years in a classroom, nearly 60 percent of teachers quit the profession. Today, school districts are able to ignore the problem by hiring replacements; almost 80 percent of the demand for teachers repre-

sents the need to replace experienced teachers, not to fill new classroom positions. (State Board for Educator Certification cited in “*Teacher Shortage worsening in Texas*,” Austin American Statesman, May 28, 2002 & SBEC Brief: 2002-02.)

- ★ **Fact 4:** Most teachers don’t stop teaching because of pay. Teachers leave the classroom primarily because of student disciplinary problems (60 percent of teachers indicated discipline as their top concern) and working conditions (54 percent of teachers indicated administrative problems as their second concern); less than a quarter of teachers identify pay as the reason for leaving teaching. (*Texas Teachers, Moonlighting, and Morale: 1980-2002*, D. Henderson & T. Henderson, Texas Teachers Association, 2002.)

These statistics mirror findings of a survey conducted by TPPF in 1999; teachers are most troubled by (a) student behavior [40 percent], poor treatment by administrators [32 percent], and compensation [14 percent]. (*Teacher Attitudes in Texas Public and Private High Schools*, J. Pisciotta, Texas Public Policy Foundation, 2000).

The problem, according to the State Board of Educator Certification, is not the supply of teachers, but the unwillingness of teachers to work in Texas

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public schools. Today, there are 420,000 individuals in Texas who are certified, but decline to teach in Texas public schools; this number is almost double the number of teachers now working in Texas public schools. (State Board of Educator Certification cited in "Teacher Trouble," San Antonio Express News, August 23, 2002)

Teacher Salaries

- ★ **Fact 5:** Texas teachers are not underpaid.

The average pay of beginning teachers is above the national average for salaries of all teachers when salaries are adjusted for the cost of living. (*Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2001*, American Federation of Teachers)

Teachers in Texas are paid more than their colleagues in the Southwest Region. Both the average teacher salary and average beginning salary are higher in Texas than in Arizona, New Mexico & Oklahoma. (*Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2001*, American Federation of Teachers)

Texas has increased teacher salaries more and faster than most other states in the nation; since 1990, teacher salaries in Texas have increased 36.5 percent while the average increase for the nation is 31.5 percent. (*Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2001*, American Federation of Teachers).

Texas invests more in teacher salaries than most other states. As a percentage of total state education funding, Texas ranks 11th in the nation – investing 40.9 percent of its education budget in teacher pay. (Survey and Analysis of

Teacher Salary Trends 2001, American Federation of Teachers, 2002)

- ★ **Fact 6:** There is no financial justification for a statewide across-the-board pay raise for teachers. Over the past decade general salary and benefit increases for teachers have failed to increase the supply of teachers nor improved teacher retention.

Retaining Qualified Teachers

- ★ **Fact 7:** The problem of teacher retention must be solved by improving working conditions so that effective teachers are willing to remain in the classroom.
- ★ **Fact 8:** Teacher retention is declining and, if unchecked, will precipitate a broad-scale shortage of teachers in all Texas public schools within the decade.

Demographers predict a dramatic increase of students over the coming decade; districts will have to create and staff new classrooms. The present supply of newly certified teachers and the estimated increasing supply of such teachers in the future will not meet the needs of new classrooms when combined with the vacancies unless the problem of teacher retention is solved.

Four Principles to Guide State Policy on Teacher Pay

- ★ **Principle 1:** Teachers are not, and should not become employees of the State. The State's role in determining teacher pay is and should remain limited because teachers are employees of local school districts. School district responsibility for hiring, firing and paying teachers is a key element of local control. The primary role of local dis-

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tricts in determining teacher pay should be preserved.

- ★ **Principle 2:** Local supply and demand, not artificial pay scales, should determine teacher pay. Local district money is available for targeted teacher pay raises if districts are freed from state pay scales. Funds that would otherwise be spent for automatic increases for under-performing teachers or teachers for which there is ample supply could instead be targeted to highly effective teachers and to teachers in short supply.
- ★ **Principle 3:** Across-the-board pay raises should be avoided at all costs. Paying all teachers the same and granting automatic increases, regardless of classroom effectiveness, rewards mediocrity and reduces the incentive for exerting extra effort in the classroom. Across-the-board pay raises, including increased benefits, are counterproductive.
- ★ **Principle 4:** A fair performance-based rating policy can and should be developed by the State. With student academic performance data, the State can establish a fair teacher rating system based on student improvement rather than a single test score in a given year. Teacher performance measures should recognize the learning disadvantages certain students may have and that teachers must overcome.

Recommendations for the 78th Texas Legislature

- ★ Establish waivers for school districts from the teacher salary schedule or eliminate it entirely.
- ★ Encourage districts to establish special pay stipends for the specific areas

where there is a shortage of qualified teachers.

- ★ Authorize performance-based pay that links and rewards high performance with employment longevity.
- ★ Create policies to encourage teachers who are teaching out-of-area to become certified in the subjects they are teaching.
- ★ Establish a public school teacher clearinghouse to disseminate statewide information about specific teacher vacancies and teacher candidates.
- ★ Create policies to encourage certified teachers to return to public school classrooms.
- ★ Create policies that give schools incentives and a selection of strategies to address disciplinary and management problems.
- ★ Create policies that give schools incentives to retain effective teachers and to discourage school-wide early retirement initiatives.
- ★ Modify the accountability system to eliminate incentives for schools to mask, instead of resolve, disciplinary problems.
- ★ Stimulate growth in the number of alternative and academically-qualified teachers by developing an alternative to EXCET (the state teacher certification exam) that (a) assesses only academic knowledge and skills; (b) enables school districts to determine pedagogical requirements for teachers based on the needs of their students; (c) meets federal requirements, primarily HR 1 – *No Child Left Behind*; (d) is directly

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administered by the State Board of Educator Certification; (e) may be taken by any individual who passes a criminal background check; and (f) establishes full state certification for teaching.

**Survey & Analysis of
Teacher Salary Trends 2001**
American Federation of Teachers

National Comparisons

Average national salary
\$43,250.

Texas average salary
\$38,359.
(26th of 50 states)

Average national beginning salary
\$28,986.

Texas average beginning salary
\$29,823.

Percent change in average
national teacher salary 1990-2001
31.5 percent

Percent change in average
Texas teacher salary 1990-2001
36.5 percent

Texas average teacher salary
adjusted by cost-of-living index
\$42,444.
(20th of 50 states)

Texas teacher salary as percentage
of total state education spending
40.9 percent
(11th of 50 states)

Southwest Region Comparisons
(Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma)

Average Southwest Region
beginning teacher salary
\$27,409.

Average Texas beginning teacher salary
\$29,823.
(Texas is highest in region and 26th in nation)

Average Southwest Region teacher salary
\$35,234.

Average Texas teacher salary
\$38,359.
(Texas is highest in region)

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