



Teacher Quality and Compensation



The Issue

Nothing besides a student's family is more important to educational success than a great teacher. Therefore, we must return to a focus on campus leadership because it is important for policymakers and the public to learn from those who are closest to the classroom.

Likewise, children must be the focus of any conversation about school budgets. The first questions that should be asked: "How much of our spending gets to the students in the classroom?" Texas spends \$12,106 per student each year. In Texas, the average elementary school class size is 18 students; in high schools, the average class size is 27. Therefore, Texas spends about \$215,000 per elementary school class and about \$325,000 per high school class. However, the average Texas teacher's salary is only \$48,110.

A particular roadblock to empowering principals and local school boards is Chapter 21 of the Education Code. Meria Carstarphen, former superintendent of the Austin ISD, provided insight on this. She was formerly superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools in Minnesota, which is not a Right to Work state. Yet, she testified that Texas labor laws make it more difficult to manage labor than the union states she previously worked in. She found that Texas' Chapter 21 labor laws add up to \$80,000 to each dismissal process. These labor laws harm the teaching profession, and force misallocation of resources.

California, not exactly a free market leader on labor issues, recently had a court rule that its tenure laws deprive students of their constitutional rights. The court said: "Substantial evidence presented makes it clear to this court that the challenged statutes disproportionately affect poor and/or minority students. The evidence is compelling. Indeed, it shocks the conscience."

Teachers must be allowed to take on leadership roles. Teacher leadership has the potential to translate big challenges into opportunities if teachers are allowed to serve in hybrid roles that give them the power over their own professional growth and job satisfaction. Throughout recent budget cuts, teachers have emphasized that collaboration with their colleagues is most helpful. The annual MetLife survey of teachers concluded, "In 2009, nine in 10 teachers agreed that other teachers contribute to their success in the classroom."

With this in mind, we propose that educators who wish to take on leadership roles should be fully supported by the Legislature: a group of professional educators should be entitled to their own professional academy. Teachers who have been rated "proficient" for five years should be eligible to apply for a Professional Charter. Upon receiving a charter, these professional educators would be entitled to open a school. Funding per student would be equivalent to the state average funding per student for open-enrollment charter schools. Then, just as doctors and lawyers can establish their own professional practice and share in their own success, so could professional teachers.

The Facts

- Becoming a teacher in Texas requires a lengthy certification process that makes it difficult for otherwise qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession.
- Texas' state salary schedule requires school districts to give annual raises to all instructors in the district based on longevity within the profession.
- Advanced degrees do not correlate with higher student achievement, yet they usually lead to higher pay.

- Educators in Texas are generally granted “term contracts.” However, the state Term Contract Nonrenewal Act has the same effect as teacher tenure provides in other states.
- It is extremely difficult to dismiss ineffective teachers in Texas. Labor laws protect employees at the expense of good teachers, taxpayers, and students.
- Teachers are paid less than market rates due to the monopsony power of school districts.
- Texas teachers in metropolitan areas could earn another \$12,000 annually if universal school choice were adopted.

Recommendations

- Lower the barriers to entry for potential teachers by allowing individuals with strong credentials to more easily become teachers.
- Empower local school principals to determine teacher pay by eliminating Texas’ minimum salary schedule which acts as a one-size-fits-all template and inhibits common sense resource allocations to the detriment of good teachers.
- Repeal Chapter 21 of the Texas Education code, which hurts the careers of great teachers by protecting the teachers that are demonstrably poor.
- Enable teachers to take on leadership roles by establishing a Professional Charter Program.
- Enact universal school choice to improve teacher pay and job satisfaction.

Resources

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership by Dana Markow, et. al., MetLife, Inc. (Feb. 2013).

No Financial Accountability by Mark Hurley, Texas Education Accountability Project (Mar. 2012).

Report for the Efficiency Interveners by Eric Hanushek (July 2012).

Expert Witness Report by Allan Parker Jr. (July 2012).

