

LEGISLATORS' GUIDE TO THE 85th LEGISLATURE

S P E C I A L S E S S I O N 2 0 1 7

Teacher Pay and Administrative Flexibility

The Issue

Nothing is more important to a child's academic success in the classroom than his teacher. To ensure that students have access to the best educators, administrators must be free to hire, fire, and determine the pay of teachers. The Texas Association of School Administrators agrees: "Bureaucracies value power and authority, while learning organizations are driven by beliefs and values. *Schools must be transformed from their current bureaucratic form....* Educating our youth is not a state responsibility but a local function. Attempts to run the schools from Austin and Washington will result in a further decline in the local sense of ownership and responsibility at the very time when local involvement is most needed."

When parents, principals, and teachers are given the authority to make the necessary decisions to improve public education, it is the students who will win. Local administrators will have more freedom to encourage and reward their highest performers and teachers will experience increased work satisfaction and productivity. They will both provide the best product to their customer: the student and his parents.

Texas spends more than \$12,000 per student each year on public education. In Texas, the average elementary school class has 18 students; in high schools, the average class size is 27. Therefore, Texas spends about \$216,000 per elementary school class and about \$324,000 per high school class. However, the average Texas teacher's salary in 2014-2015 was \$50,715.

From 1992-2014, teaching staff in Texas increased by 53 percent, while administrator and "all other staff" increased by an alarming 174 percent. If Texas had simply increased its administrative staff at the same rate as teaching staff, Texas would have saved \$7.4 billion *annually*. Every teacher could receive a \$22,100 pay raise *annually*. Of course, pay raises should be based on teacher performance, not a pre-determined set salary schedule.

At the same time, school leaders must be relieved of some of the most onerous limitations on staff management found in Chapter 21 of the Education Code. Meria Carstarphen, former superintendent of the Austin ISD and former superintendent in a traditionally run union state, testified that Texas labor laws (non-union) make it more difficult to manage labor practices than the union states in which she previously worked. She found that Texas' Chapter 21 labor laws can add up to \$80,000 for each teacher dismissal process. These labor laws harm the teaching profession, force misallocation of resources, and prevent employment decisions from being made at the local level.

What is in the best interest of the child? Clearly, great teachers matter to the child. And great teachers should be rewarded and encouraged to mentor their less-experienced peers. Allowing districts—and their locally elected board members—to direct salary

schedules and hiring practices helps both teachers and students. No bureaucracy in Austin should have the power to dictate how a locally run school district runs its business. That is not in the best interest of the child.

The Facts

- Texas spends over half of its budget on education—the largest line item in the budget.
- Texas maintains a state salary schedule that requires school districts to give annual raises to all instructors in the district based on longevity within the profession.
- Advanced degrees and years of service 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's 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 stand to make substantially higher salaries if districts limited non-teaching staff growth to that of teaching staff.

Recommendations

- 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.

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).
- [*Allan E. Parker's Expert Report for School Finance Trial*](#) by Kent Grusenderf and Michael Barba, Texas Public Policy Foundation (Jan. 2015).
- [*Public Education Productivity Improvement: The Path Forward for Texas Policymakers*](#) by Donald R. McAdams and Lynn Jenkins, Texas Institute for Education Reform (July 2012).

[Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas](#), Public Education Visioning Institute and Texas Association of School Administrators (May 2008).

[“Table 213.40. Staff, teachers, and teachers as a percentage of staff in public elementary and secondary school systems.”](#) National Center for Education Statistics.

[“Table 203.40. Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by level, grade, and state or jurisdiction: Fall 2013.”](#) National Center for Education Statistics.

