

**Testimony of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association
to the Senate Finance Committee
October 9, 2023
By Lonnie Hollingsworth, Jr., General Counsel**

TCTA appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Finance Committee.

Key Comments and Recommendations:

TCTA recommends that lawmakers fund a salary increase and require districts to use the money for that purpose. These salary increases should be implemented as follows:

1. Increase the basic allotment.
2. Add a provision to Section 21.402, Texas Education Code that guarantees a minimum increase to each covered educator above their local salary schedule step.
3. Add a funding provision to provide flexible funding to districts that receive insufficient funding to pay for the required salary increases and provide for other needs.

The state should not rely on the Teacher Incentive Allotment program to attract and retain teachers, but must ensure that all salaries are raised to competitive levels.

TCTA opposes diverting public school funds to private schools and continues to oppose any sort of private school vouchers. The Legislature has chosen to spend the bulk of a record budget surplus on property tax reduction, limiting the funding available for public schools. This limited funding should not be diverted to educational systems that lack transparency and accountability.

Teacher Pay

The most direct and important way to meaningfully support educators is to provide a significant, sustainable, and ongoing increase in compensation to retain teachers and attract more students to the teaching profession. According to a July 2022 survey from the EdWeek Research Center, six out of 10 teachers say that the compensation strategy that would be the most effective in encouraging them to stay in the profession is a base salary increase that exceeds cost of living increases. According to the same survey, bonuses, unless they are substantially large, are not an effective way to keep teachers in the profession, with only 5% of teachers saying bonuses around \$2,000 or less would keep them in the profession. A chart from the survey is included in the Appendix.ⁱ

Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath, in announcing the Teacher Vacancy Task Force in March 2022, declared that teachers are the “single most important school-based factor affecting student outcomes.”ⁱⁱ

Teachers in Texas make an average of \$7,449 less than the national average teacher salary. Even when accounting for costs of living, teacher wages in Texas rank 29th out of the 50 states and Washington, D.C. (Every Texan Report 2022). When accounting for inflation, the average salary for Texas teachers remained essentially unchanged in the past decade (2010-2021).

Texas teachers face what the Economic Policy Institute calls the “Teacher Pay Penalty,” which is “how much less, in percentage terms, public school teachers are paid in weekly wages relative to other college educated workers (after accounting for factors known to affect earnings such as education, experience, and state residence).” Texas ranks 28th nationally in teacher wage competitiveness, with teachers earning only 78.5% of what their college-educated counterparts earn.ⁱⁱⁱ

Texas has exceeded national teacher attrition averages by approximately 25% over the past decade.^{iv} The primary driver of teacher shortages in Texas is the attrition of teachers leaving public schools. In 2021–22, 99.7% of statewide hires were to replace teachers who had left teaching in Texas public schools the year before.^v Inadequate compensation is directly connected to teachers both leaving the profession and moving to other districts. Both the absolute level of compensation, adjusted for costs of living, and the gap between pay in teaching and other professions can drive attrition.^{vi}

Compensation is a source of significant stress among a large majority of Texas teachers. Eighty-one percent of teachers reported in a 2022 statewide poll that their pay is unfair (including 91% of teachers making less than \$50,000 per year). Additionally, over half of Texas teachers (52%) reported that they worked at least one additional job, and 79% of those teachers (41% of total teachers) reported that this was out of financial necessity.^{vii}

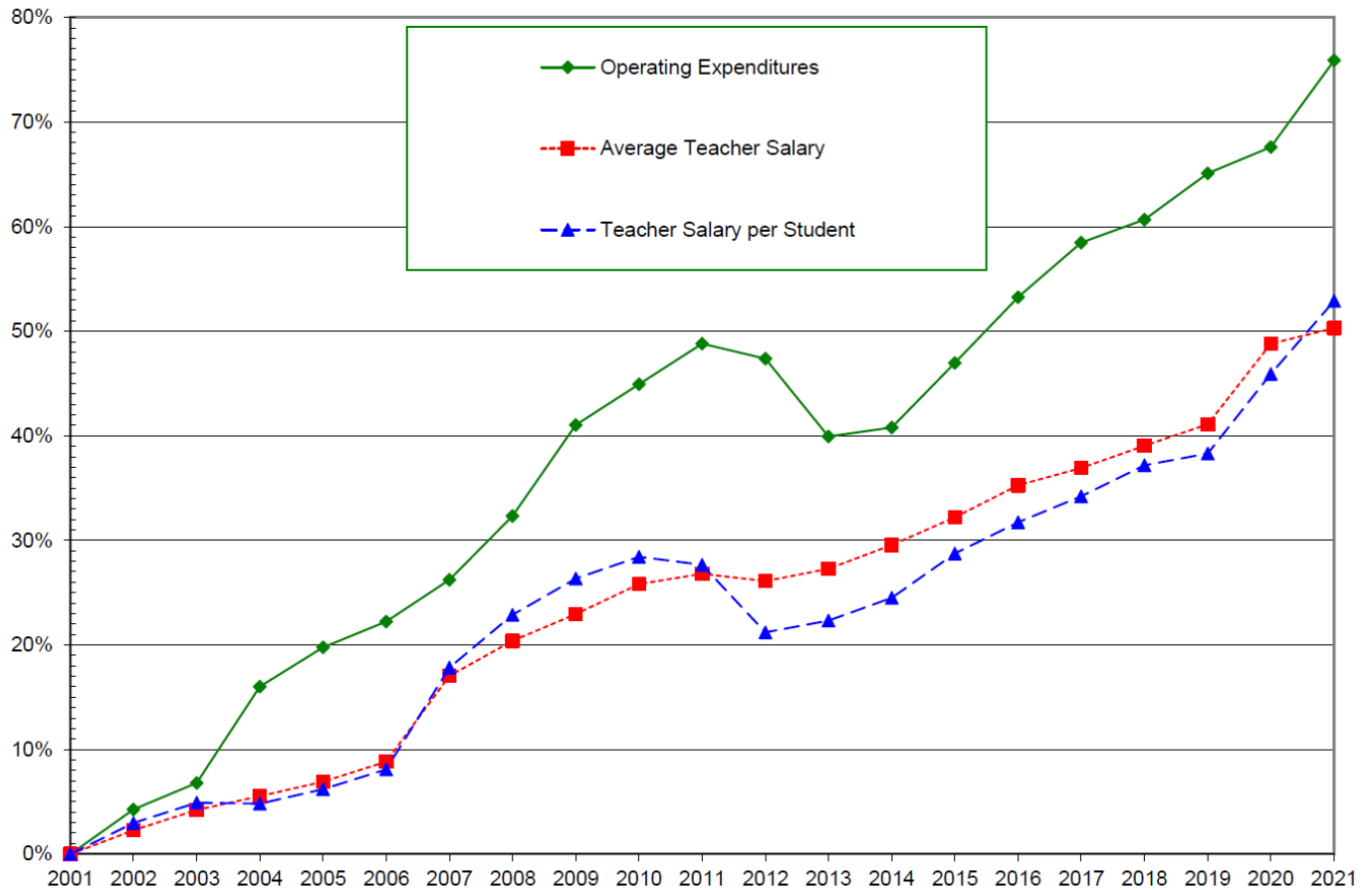
The Texas Education Agency stated in its latest Legislative Appropriations Request that a recent increase in school funding “represents an investment first and foremost in teachers, where school systems spend the bulk of their funds.”^{viii} Yet teachers have not been taking home their fair share of that investment, according to a TCTA analysis of school districts’ operating expenditures over the past two decades.

The analysis shows that teacher pay has not kept pace with overall increases in school funding. In 2001, teacher salaries accounted for 43.8 percent of school districts’ per-pupil operating expenditures. Two decades later, that figure has dropped to 38.1 percent.

If teacher pay had remained in line with increases in school expenditures over that same period, the average teacher salary would have been 15 percent higher in 2021 — lifting the average teacher salary of \$57,641 by an additional \$8,660. The TCTA analysis and chart showing the growing disparity in operational expenditures and teacher salaries per pupil follow:

School Year	Operating Expenditures per Pupil	Teacher Salary per Pupil	Teacher salaries per pupil as a percentage of operating expenditures per pupil	Average Teacher Salary
2001	\$5,915	\$2,592	43.8%	38,361
2002	\$6,167	\$2,669	43.3%	39,232
2003	\$6,317	\$2,719	43.0%	39,974
2004	\$6,861	\$2,717	39.6%	40,478
2005	\$7,084	\$2,752	38.9%	41,011
2006	\$7,229	\$2,802	38.8%	41,744
2007	\$7,466	\$3,054	40.9%	44,897
2008	\$7,826	\$3,185	40.7%	46,179
2009	\$8,342	\$3,275	39.3%	47,159
2010	\$8,572	\$3,328	38.8%	48,263
2011	\$8,802	\$3,309	37.6%	48,638
2012	\$8,717	\$3,141	36.0%	48,375
2013	\$8,276	\$3,170	38.3%	48,821
2014	\$8,327	\$3,227	38.8%	49,692
2015	\$8,692	\$3,337	38.4%	50,715
2016	\$9,065	\$3,414	37.7%	51,891
2017	\$9,373	\$3,478	37.1%	52,525
2018	\$9,503	\$3,556	37.4%	53,334
2019	\$9,766	\$3,584	36.7%	54,122
2020	\$9,913	\$3,781	38.1%	57,091
2021	\$10,406	\$3,964	38.1%	57,641
Teacher salary if average teacher salary per pupil had kept up with increases in operating expenditures per pupil				\$66,301
Difference (amount by which teacher salaries have fallen behind due to insufficient dedication of revenues to salary increases)				\$8,660

Percentage Increase in Operating Expenditures vs. Teacher Salaries



The Texas Legislature has, at times, recognized the singular importance of teachers when crafting school finance legislation by explicitly directing school districts to raise teacher salaries. Going forward, **TCTA recommends that lawmakers fund a salary increase and require districts to use the money for that purpose.** Otherwise, history suggests that teachers will not get it. An appendix at the end of this testimony shows the history of significant teacher salary increases in the past two decades and the legislation through which those increases were accomplished.

TCTA appreciates the provisions of HB 3 (from the 2019 legislative session) providing for increases in teacher salaries. HB 3 made significant increases in the minimum salary schedule, which raised salaries for teachers in districts paying at or close to the schedule. HB 3 also included provisions intended to increase compensation and benefits for non-administrative employees as districts receive additional funding through increases in the basic allotment. Unfortunately, this provision did little to encourage districts to pass along increases in funding to educators. The compensation analysis conducted by TEA shows that teacher salary increases were greatest in smaller districts that had been paying at or close to the minimum salary schedule.

Simple Average by District Enrollment Size			
Enrollment	Teachers, Nurses, Librarians, Counselors Gains	Teacher Salary Increase 0-5 years of experience	Teacher Salary Increases greater than 5 years of experience
under 500	\$ 153,388	\$ 4,613	\$ 6,352
500-999	\$ 307,944	\$ 4,233	\$ 6,115
1000-1999	\$ 560,766	\$ 3,587	\$ 4,735
2000-2999	\$ 817,826	\$ 3,151	\$ 4,017
3000-3999	\$ 1,005,375	\$ 3,087	\$ 4,236
4000-5999	\$ 1,358,817	\$ 3,452	\$ 4,459
6000-7999	\$ 2,003,563	\$ 2,947	\$ 3,692
8000-9999	\$ 2,240,668	\$ 2,831	\$ 3,533
over 10000	\$ 7,353,807	\$ 2,781	\$ 3,487

https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2019-2020_compensation_analysis_published_report.pdf

The language in Section 48.051, Education Code that requires districts to use 22.5% of increased funding on teacher compensation increases is inadequate to ensure that teachers will actually receive appropriate increases. First, teacher salaries should constitute a much higher percentage of district operation budgets than 22.5%, so the percentage of increased funding dedicated to compensation increases should be proportionately higher. We appreciated the proposal in HB 100 to increase the percentage to 50%. Additionally, the required increase cannot be calculated until TEA determines the final settle-up for districts in the summer after the year for which the increase should have been paid. By then, there is no remedy for teachers in districts that have failed to increase compensation as required by the statute. Generally, although there has been an increase in funding invested in public education over the last decade, teacher salaries are not keeping pace. For this reason, **state law should include a provision that specifically and proportionately increases teacher salaries as funding for schools is increased.**

During the regular session, the Legislature attempted to address teacher compensation through HB 100. We did have some serious concerns about the bill that passed the House and the Senate, which we had hoped to address had the bill moved forward. **Our most serious concern was the change in the minimum salaries from a monthly minimum to an annual minimum.** We are concerned that districts would respond by putting teachers on annual contracts and requiring teachers to perform duties during summer months without additional compensation. The 187-day requirement for teacher work days is a minimum standard and not a ceiling. The only ceiling we currently have is the fact that the minimum salary schedule provides for minimum monthly salaries, so that districts typically provide for 10-month contracts. Even though the increases in the minimum salaries payable under HB 100 would be significant for teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience, the impact of the changes would have been sharply reduced for experienced teachers or teachers at districts that currently pay significantly above the minimum salary schedule. Arguably, the bill would have caused a potential 20% increase in duties without a commensurate increase in compensation for many educators.

While the proposed changes to the minimum salaries payable and other mechanisms in HB 100 would have increased salaries for some teachers, it is unclear how much salaries would have been increased, and there was no specific guarantee for all teachers. We are also very concerned

about the elimination of the current minimum teacher salary schedule for several reasons. While minimum salaries would not have been eliminated entirely, they would have been replaced with minimum salaries at zero, five, and ten years of experience with four lanes for each of these steps. Under the current system, many teachers find themselves maxed out at step 20, as districts have little incentive to continue to increase pay above that step. We are concerned that the proposal would have teachers maxed out at ten years instead.

The current system raises minimum salaries in direct proportion to increases in the basic allotment. It was this mechanism that created the bulk of the raises that resulted from the passage of HB 3. The proposal in HB 100 would have eliminated the linkage between the basic allotment and teacher salaries. We also have concerns about the proposal during the regular session that would have eliminated any minimum salary payable for teachers with unsatisfactory performance ratings. The bill did not define what is considered to be unsatisfactory, and this provision would leave salary decisions subject to the decision of a single appraiser in many situations.

We continue to have concerns about the teacher incentive allotment as explained below and would prefer that it not be tied to the minimum salaries payable.

Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)

Since its inception in 2019, the rollout of the TIA program has been slow. Currently, 378 districts and charters out of more than 1,200 are in the process or have completed the process of having their local designation system approved to participate in the TIA program. Per the General Appropriations Act, the TIA program is anticipated to include 5.2% (19,757/377,836) of teachers by 2025.

If the goal of the committee is to attract and retain teachers, prospective employees need assurances, not “chances.” Minimum salaries need to be raised to competitive levels, as do benefits. The data show that fewer people are willing to make the choice to be in a profession that puts them at a financial disadvantage.^{ix} Incentive pay is simply not a substitute for overall compensation increases. While districts can use measures of student academic growth other than student test scores and can design systems that allow non-core academic teachers to qualify for a designation, many do not do so. This leaves teachers of subjects that do not have standardized test data available ineligible for a designation and the extra pay, leaving educators in important subjects such as special education, career and technology, and fine arts without the opportunity to receive a designation and any associated extra pay.

If the TIA is to be continued and expanded, we recommend that it be made less complex. Districts should have the flexibility to use TIA funds to pay teachers who take on more challenging assignments and responsibilities, and funds should not be limited to teachers who are identified by unproven measures of effectiveness based on standardized student test scores. We also recommend that the state require that any local teacher designation system be designed to allow any certified teacher the opportunity to receive a designation.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/better-pay-would-keep-teachers-from-quitting-but-theres-more-to-it/2022/07>

ⁱⁱ Texas Education Agency. (March 10, 2022). *TEA establishes Teacher Vacancy Task Force to address ongoing staffing challenges in public education*. <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/news-releases/news-2022/tea-establishes-teacher-vacancy-task-force-to-address-ongoing-staffing-challenges-in-public-education>

ⁱⁱⁱ (Allegretto, S. (2022). The teacher pay penalty has hit a new high: Trends in teacher wages and compensation through 2021. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/>)

^{iv} (Bland, J. A., Wojcikiewicz, S. K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Wei, W. (2023). Strengthening pathways into the teaching profession in Texas: Challenges and opportunities. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/957.902>)

^v *Id.*

^{vi} *Id.*

^{vii} (Charles Butt Foundation (2022) The 2022 Texas teacher poll: Persistent problems and a path forward. <https://charlesbuttdfn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-teacher-poll.pdf>)

^{viii} Texas Education Agency. (September 2022) *Texas Education Agency Legislative Appropriations Request*. <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/agency-finances/legislative-appropriations-request>

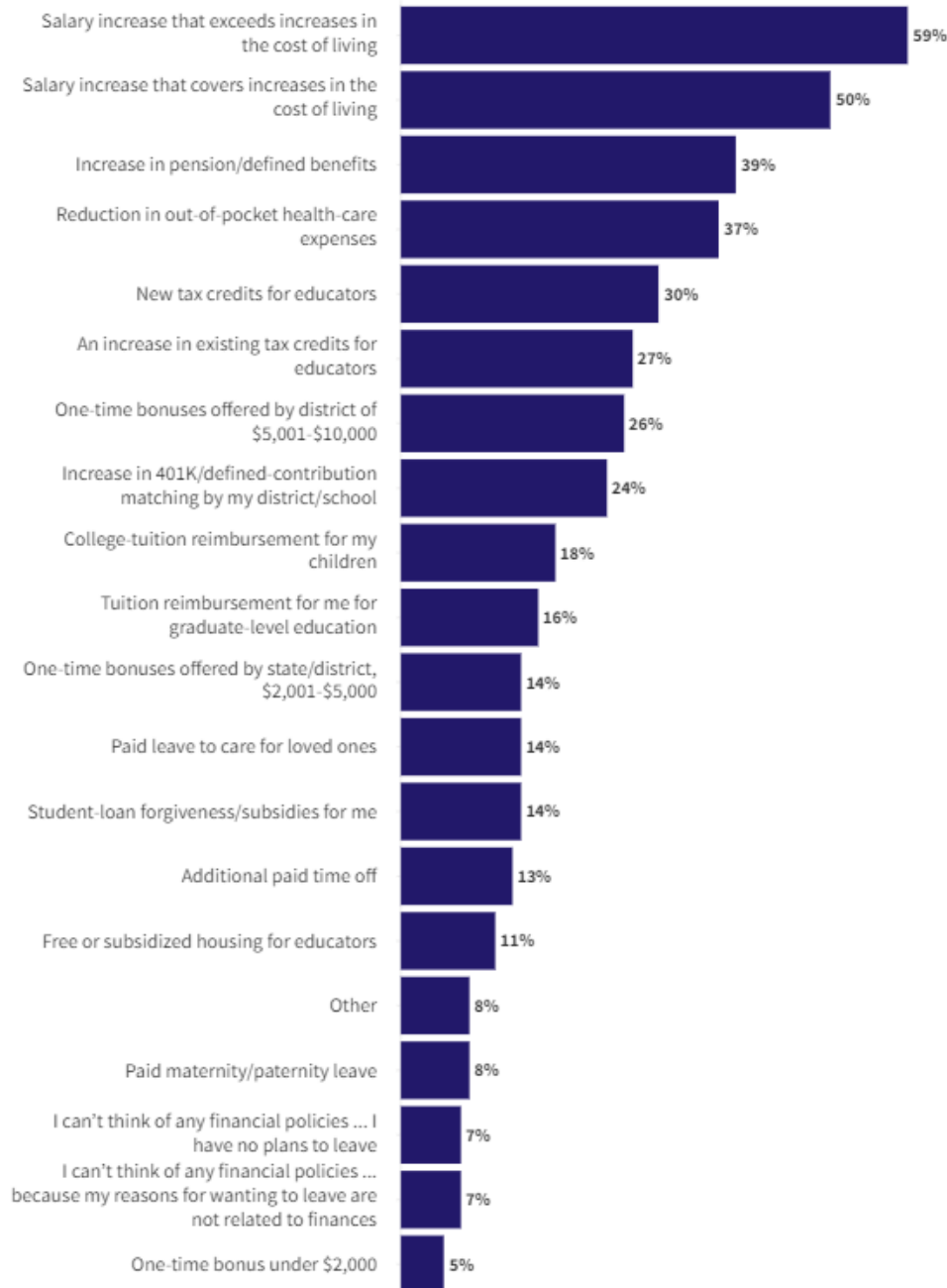
^{ix} *Low relative pay and high incidence of moonlighting play a role in the teacher shortage, particularly in high-poverty schools*, Emma García, Elaine Weiss, Economic Policy Institute, May 9, 2019

<https://files.epi.org/pdf/161908.pdf>: Paying adequate overall salaries is critical to each district's being able to recruit and retain a quality teacher in every classroom, despite the school's location, education challenges it presents, or subjects that must be taught. In short, teacher wage levels need to be competitive.

REWARDING TEACHER EXCELLENCE A teacher compensation handbook for state and local policymakers, Allan Odden and Marc Wallace, Consortium for Policy Research in Education Wisconsin Center for Education Research University of Wisconsin February 2007, <http://picusodden.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/tcomp-handbook-feb-28-07-final-3-05-07.pdf>: "Average salaries are critical for retention; average teacher salaries should be set at some competitive level to enable the education system to retain teachers that have entered teaching and at some point decide whether or not they want to remain in the profession."

Appendix

Which of the following financial policies—if any—would make you more likely to stay in the teaching profession long-term? Select all that apply.



*Results show responses from teachers.
SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, July 2022



Past teacher salary increases

SB 4, 76th Regular Session had a \$3000 salary increase using the following language:

(c-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), for the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years, a classroom teacher, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, or full-time school nurse is entitled to a monthly salary that is at least equal to the greater of:

(1) the sum of:

(A) the monthly salary the employee would have received for the 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school year, as applicable under the district's salary schedule for the 1998-1999 school year, if that schedule had been in effect for the 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school year, including any local supplement and any money representing a career ladder supplement the employee would have received in the 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school year; and

(B) \$300; or

(2) the salary to which the employee is entitled under Subsection (a).

(c-2) Subsection (c-1) and this subsection expire September 1, 2001.

(d) A classroom teacher, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, or full-time school nurse employed by a school district in the 2000-2001 school year is, as long as the employee is employed by the same district, entitled to a salary that is at least equal to the salary the employee received for the 2000-2001 school year.

The salary increase was funded by an increase in the basic allotment, guaranteed wealth level and Tier 2 guaranteed yield and by additional state aid through the following provision:

Sec. 42.2512. ADDITIONAL STATE AID FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF SALARIES. (a) A school district, including a school district that is otherwise ineligible for state aid under this chapter, is entitled to state aid in an amount, as determined by the commissioner, equal to the difference, if any, between:

(1) an amount equal to the product of \$3,000 multiplied by the number of classroom teachers, full-time librarians, full-time counselors certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, and full-time school nurses employed by the district and entitled to a minimum salary under Section 21.402; and

(2) an amount equal to 80 percent of the amount of additional funds to which the district is entitled due to the increases made by S.B. No. 4, Acts of the 76th Legislature, Regular Session, 1999, to:

(A) the equalized wealth level under Section 41.002;

(B) the basic allotment under Section 42.101; and

(C) the guaranteed level of state and local funds per weighted student per cent of tax effort under Section 42.302.

(b) A determination by the commissioner under this section is final and may not be appealed.

(c) The commissioner may adopt rules to implement this section.

A similar funding mechanism was used to establish state support for health care in HB 3343, 77th Regular Session. This funding has not been increased since this time.

HB 1, 79th Third Called Session increased salaries by \$2500 through the following mechanism:

(c-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), for the 2006-2007 school year, a classroom teacher, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, or full-time school nurse is entitled to a monthly salary that is at least equal to the sum of:

(1) the monthly salary the employee would have received for the 2006-2007 school year under the district's salary schedule for the 2005-2006 school year, if that schedule had been in effect for the 2006-2007 school year, including any local supplement and any money representing a career ladder supplement the employee would have received in the 2006-2007 school year; and

(2) \$250.

(c-2) Subsection (c-1) and this subsection expire September 1, 2007.

(d) A classroom teacher, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, or full-time school nurse employed by a school district in the 2006-2007 [2000-2001] school year is, as long as the employee is employed by the same district, entitled to a salary that is at least equal to the salary the employee received for the 2006-2007 [2000-2001] school year.

HB 3646, 81st Regular Session increased salaries through a mechanism that varied by district with a minimum \$800 increase using the following language:

(c-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, each school district shall increase the monthly salary of each classroom teacher, full-time speech pathologist, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, and full-time school nurse by the greater of:

(1) \$80; or

(2) the maximum uniform amount that, when combined with any resulting increases in the amount of contributions made by the district for social security coverage for the specified employees or by the district on behalf of the specified employees under Section 825.405, Government Code, may be provided using an amount equal to the product of \$60 multiplied by the number of students in weighted average daily attendance in the school during the 2009-2010 school year.

(c-2) An increase in salary under Subsection (c-1) does not include:

(1) any amount an employee would have received for the 2009-2010 or 2010-2011 school year, as applicable, under the district's salary schedule for the 2008-2009 school year, if that schedule had been in effect for the 2009-2010 or 2010-2011 school year, including any local supplement and any money representing a career ladder supplement the employee would have received in the 2009-2010 or 2010-2011 school year; or

(2) any part of the salary to which an employee is entitled under Subsection (a).

(c-3) Subsections (c-1) and (c-2) and this subsection expire September 1, 2011.

(d) A classroom teacher, full-time speech pathologist, full-time librarian, full-time counselor certified under Subchapter B, or full-time school nurse employed by a school district in the 2010-2011 [2006-2007] school year is, as long as the employee is employed by the same district, entitled to a salary that is at least equal to the salary the employee received for the 2010-2011 [2006-2007] school year.

HB 3646 increased the basic allotment and provided a minimum increase of \$120 per WADA to every district. The salary increase constituted 50 percent of each district's minimum entitlement.