

**Comments of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association
to the Senate Education Committee
May 24, 2022
By Lonnie Hollingsworth, General Counsel**

TCTA appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the interim charges for this committee relating to the COVID-19 pandemic impact on the educator talent pipeline as well as the monitoring charge related to HB 3, HB 1525 and HB 4545.

Key comments and recommendations:

TCTA requests the committee recommend funding dedicated to salary increases for teachers and other non-administrative education professionals that at least brings salaries to the national average and accounts for inflation in future years.

Increasing the state's contribution to active employee health insurance must be part of the teacher compensation discussion.

With regard to the Teacher Incentive Allotment, 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.

Comprehensive mentoring and induction programs provide an evidence-based strategy that can boost the effectiveness of early career teachers while building critical teaching conditions known to significantly reduce teacher attrition. Additional models include Grow Your Own programs, teacher apprenticeships, and teacher residency programs.

Funding for the working conditions survey should be reinstated and ongoing.

The state should investigate ways to incentivize good managerial behavior at the local level.

Lawmakers should continue to refine the reading academy and HB 4545 accelerated instruction/tutoring programs in the upcoming legislative session to reduce the burdens on teachers and mandate that teachers be paid for any additional required time; and must ensure that when any new proposals are considered, they will be implemented in a manner that will avoid increasing teacher workloads.

We wish to start with a quote that we believe speaks directly to the issues at hand:

“At the statewide level, many solutions are short-term at best — marketing campaigns, licensure test waivers, emergency certifications, retiree hiring, small pay raises, one-time bonuses and the like. Some immediate response strategies, like allowing more uncertified teachers in the classroom, result in lower quality instruction for students. District policies and practices play into the equation as states navigate which short- or long-term strategies to employ. Patchwork repairs are not solving our leaky pipeline problem, nor are they attracting new talent.”

A Blueprint to Solve Teacher Shortages, Southern Regional Education Board, April 2022
https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/blueprint_2022_links.pdf?1651168612

CHARGE: Examine the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on the educator talent pipeline.

It is well-known and well-documented that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers across the country and in Texas are demoralized, stressed, and exhausted.ⁱ Teacher stress is linked to teaching performance and student academic outcomes.ⁱⁱ It should also be noted that there are many factors outside of those related to the pandemic that have contributed to teacher dissatisfaction in recent years.

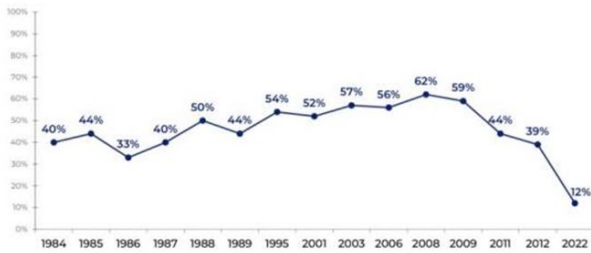
Teacher dissatisfaction is at an all-time high. In a 2021 RAND survey, 66% of teachers said they had seriously considered leaving their jobs in the past year; and among teachers planning to leave, 64% said their pay was not sufficient, making low teacher pay the #1 reason for staff departures. In 2022, the Merrimack College Teacher Survey found 74% of teachers do not think their salary is fair for the work that they do and more than half of teachers said they likely wouldn’t advise their younger self to pursue a career in teaching.

The low satisfaction levels of teachers already in the classroom may impact the pipeline of future teachers. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined by about a third over the past decade, and experts say that is likely in part due to the perception of teaching as a low-paid, thankless career (The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 2022). According to an ACT survey, the top reasons high school and college students say they want to become teachers – but do not – are low pay and a lack of career advancement.ⁱⁱⁱ

Declining Teacher Satisfaction

- 12% of teachers are very satisfied with their jobs (the lowest level since the mid-1980s).
- 74% of teachers do not think their salary is fair for the work that they do.

Percentage of K-12 teachers who say they are 'very satisfied' with their jobs



*The 2022 results are from the Merrimack College Teacher Survey.
The 1984-2012 results are from the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher.

Source: Merrimack College, 2022



THE TEACHER SALARY PROJECT

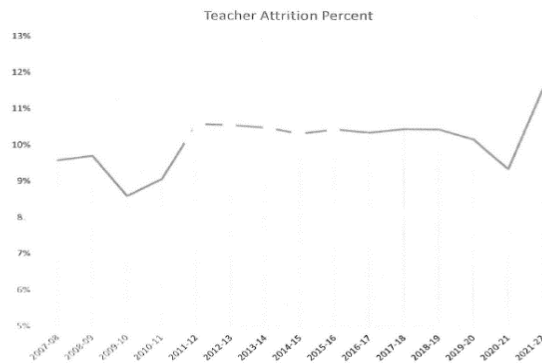


Teacher attrition

High stress levels are causing teachers to leave the profession, which creates instability among staff, students, and the community.^{iv} Indeed, Texas teachers are leaving the profession at rates not seen since the great recession, causing schools to face significant staffing shortages.



COVID has caused a significant disruption in teacher attrition, not seen since the great recession



Replacing teachers is time-consuming, costly, and disruptive to student learning. Although the financial costs within a district or school can vary substantially – more than \$20,000 per teacher in an urban district – the most significant costs are those associated with separation, recruiting and hiring new teachers, and training replacements.^v

“What people want is to be able to teach and teach well, and if they can’t do it because they can’t afford to do it or because they have a toxic work environment, that discourages them from acting as teachers who are learning and growing and getting

better and increasing their commitment to the work, that's the side of satisfaction we need to pay attention to—it's not just keeping people in their positions."

Susan Moore Johnson, Harvard University professor of education

CHARGE: Monitor the impact of both the Teacher Incentive Allotment and non-administrator compensation increases directed under House Bill 3 (86th Legislature), as well as the teacher pay raises implemented in 2019.

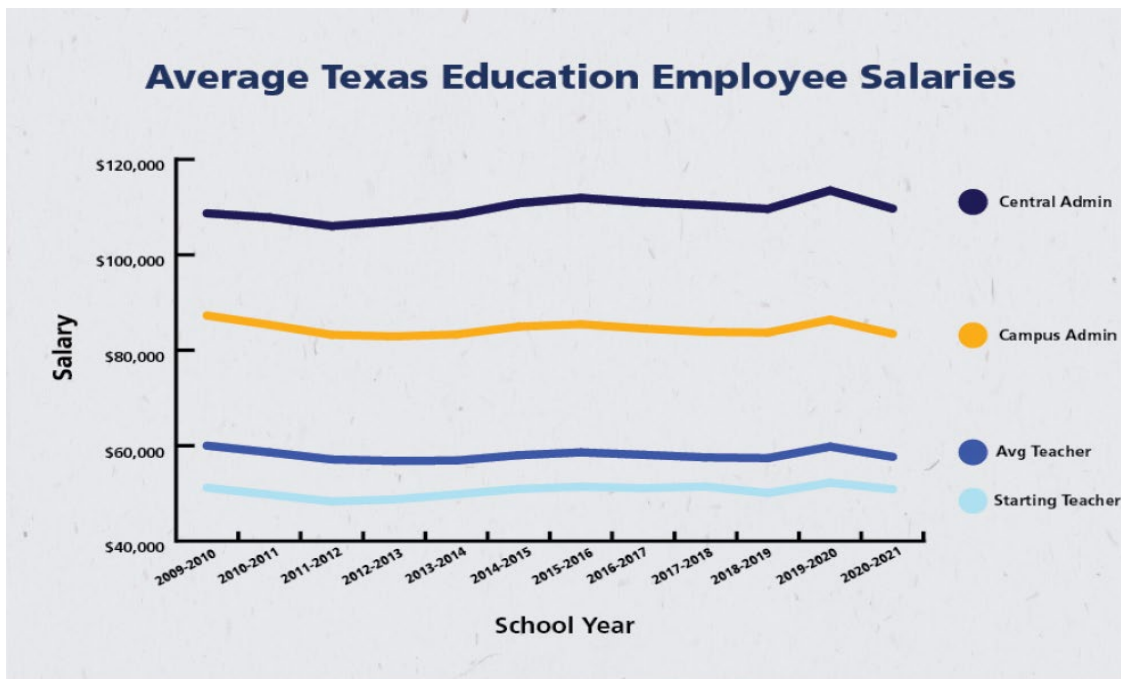
Teacher pay

TCTA appreciates the provisions of HB 3 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 percent, so the percentage of increased funding dedicated to compensation increases should be proportionately higher. 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 actually increases teacher salaries as funding for schools is increased.



Source: Texas Academic Performance Reports & Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Data

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). In addition, 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).” For the latest findings in 2019, the national average penalty was 19.2%, but these similar college graduates made 21.9% more than Texas teachers (Every Texan Report 2022). **TCTA requests the committee recommend funding that is dedicated to salary increases for teachers and other non-administrative education professionals that at least brings salaries to the national average and accounts for inflation in future years.**

Compensation is not limited to teacher pay. School employees are facing a crisis of health insurance unaffordability that must be recognized as a factor in low morale. An employee participating in the TRS-administered ActiveCare insurance plan who needs family coverage will pay a median premium of \$1,002/month in regional-based premiums for the LOWEST level of coverage. And that premium cost per month includes a \$5,000 family deductible in addition to co-pays, with most benefits not kicking in until after the deductible is met. The state’s \$75 monthly per-member contribution has not changed since the inception of the program two

decades ago. **Increasing the state’s contribution to active employee health insurance must be part of the teacher compensation discussion.**

Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)

The rollout of the TIA program has been slow — of roughly 1,200 school districts in Texas, only 127 were enrolled in the 2020-2021 school year, up from just under 50 the year before. Now in its 3rd year of operation, the Teacher Incentive Allotment program only covers 1.21% of teachers. <https://tiatexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf> Under Rider 77 of SB 1, the current general appropriations bill, TEA was asked to provide estimates of the number of designated teachers for 2021-22 and 2022-23; even under these projections, less than 5% of Texas teachers would benefit from the TIA program.

It is also important to note that as participation in TIA grows, it is likely to suffer the same fate as similar attempts of the past (e.g., the dreaded “career ladder”). The more teachers who qualify for TIA designations, the more financially unsustainable it becomes. Incentive pay is simply not a substitute for overall compensation increases.

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.^{vi}

CHARGE: Explore innovative models to improve recruitment and make recommendations to maintain a strong educator workforce pipeline, while adapting resilient school strategies to meet emergent demands in public education.

Among the models with the strongest evidence base for improving retention of new teachers is a high-quality multi-year teacher induction program. **Comprehensive mentoring and induction programs provide an evidence-based strategy that can boost the effectiveness of early career teachers while building critical teaching conditions known to significantly reduce teacher attrition.**^{vii}

Comprehensive induction programs vary in their particular design, but essential elements include a high-quality mentor program, ongoing professional development, access to an external network of beginning teachers, and standards-based evaluations of beginning teachers and the program itself.^{viii}

Other promising models for improving recruitment and maintaining a strong educator workforce pipeline include:

- **Grow Your Own programs:** These programs represent a partnership between school districts and educator preparation providers (EPPs) to select candidates (paraprofessionals, high school students, career changers) from local communities to

earn their degree and educator license to teach. Programs that target high school students provide them with exposure to careers in education, while programs targeting paraprofessionals help them earn their bachelors degree by removing barriers to accessing and persisting in higher education. A number of states, including Texas, are engaged in these programs.^{ix}

- **Teacher apprenticeship programs:** Apprenticeship provides yet another pathway for aspiring educators to earn a degree and gain practical training and experience before they become teachers of record. The apprenticeship model requires that apprentices be paid for their on-the-job training, which is a departure from traditional student teaching or practicum models. Unlike many other routes into the teaching profession, apprenticeship offers a connection to the public workforce system, which has the potential to unlock new sources of state and federal funding to help recruit and develop the teacher workforce. Additionally, the U.S. Dept. of Labor recently announced a new grant opportunity <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20220223> focused on expanding registered apprenticeship programs, and the state of Tennessee recently launched the first Teacher Occupational Apprenticeship in the country that builds on its Grow Your Own program.^x
- **Teacher residency programs:** Residencies are typically developed as a partnership between a school district and teacher preparation program with the goal of fulfilling the partner district’s hiring needs. Residencies involve a longer clinical placement than is found in most traditional or alternative programs, generally at least a full school year, with residents working under the guidance of an experienced, expert mentor before becoming the teacher of record. Finally, high-quality residencies offer teacher candidates a curriculum that is tightly integrated with their clinical practice, which creates a more powerful learning experience.

Key characteristics of strong residencies include:

1. Strong district/university partnerships
2. Coursework about teaching and learning tightly integrated with clinical practice
3. Full-year residency teaching alongside an expert mentor teacher
4. High-ability, diverse candidates recruited to meet specific district hiring needs, typically in fields where there are shortages
5. Financial support for residents in exchange for a three- to five-year teaching commitment
6. Cohorts of residents placed in “teaching schools” that model good practices with diverse learners and are designed to help novices learn to teach
7. Expert mentor teachers who co-teach with residents
8. Ongoing mentoring and support for graduates^{xi}

Texas has an established teacher residency program operated by the Texas Center for Educator Effectiveness and the Region 18 Education Service Center.

<https://www.txcee.org/teacher-residency-program/>

Working Conditions

A large body of evidence shows there is a strong link between teacher working conditions and teacher turnover and attrition.^{xii} There is also a significant link between teaching and learning conditions and school performance.^{xiii}

The six facets of working conditions that appear to be the driving factors behind teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession are: support for new teachers, generous salary schedules, fewer student discipline problems, adequate resources and classroom supplies, effective school leadership, and enhanced faculty input into school decision-making.^{xiv}

Although many facets of teacher working conditions may be under the control of local school districts and administrators, the state still has a significant role to play. First, the state should engage in comprehensive and systematic data collection regarding teacher working conditions. This step is foundational to enabling state policymakers as well as local school district leadership to develop an understanding of the particular facets of teacher working conditions that impact teacher job satisfaction and retention. Many states engage in this kind of data collection via a routinely administered survey of teachers.^{xv}

In fact, Texas law (TEC Section 7.065) currently provides for the Commissioner of Education to develop and administer an online survey to be administered statewide at least biennially to superintendents, principals, supervisors, classroom teachers, counselors, and other appropriate full-time professional employees who are required to hold a certificate. The survey was initially funded via a budget rider, and TEA contracted with the New Teacher Center, a national organization that has conducted similar surveys in other states, to help develop and administer the survey in 2014. However, the survey has not been administered since that time. **TCTA strongly encourages that funding for this survey be reinstated and ongoing.**

Second, the state should investigate ways at the state level to incentivize good managerial behavior at the local level.

CHARGE: Monitor the implementation of legislation passed by the 87th Legislature...make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following: HB 3 (86th Legislature), HB 1525, and HB 4545.

Two programs included in HB 3 (reading academies) and HB 4545 (accelerated instruction/tutoring for students not passing required standardized tests) have played a significant role in increasing teacher workloads and leading to higher levels of dissatisfaction. While well-intended, their implementation resulted in overwhelmed teachers, required by their districts to work many more hours and not receiving appropriate additional compensation.

TCTA conducted an informal survey of our members last fall and received more than 2,300 responses. Approximately half of the respondents indicated that they were being required by

their districts to work more hours by virtue of the reading academies and required tutoring, while fully 80% were working more hours that were not specifically required by their districts. Of those required to work more hours, 69% said that they were not receiving additional pay for the required extra hours.

Although we appreciate that Commissioner Morath has made changes to the reading academy requirements to try to mitigate some issues, we remain concerned that HB 1525's extension of the reading academy completion deadline by another year will not have its intended effect, given that none of TEA's upcoming changes to the reading academies include allowing teachers who were not able to finish the entire 11-month program this year to be able to only complete the part they did not get to the following year.

We also appreciate that Commissioner Morath has pointed out to districts the various funding sources that could be used for stipends to pay teachers for their additional hours. However, in the absence of legislative direction requiring additional compensation, it is clear that, as usual, the available funds did not get used to appropriately compensate teachers.

These added requirements, and the lack of required pay for the additional responsibilities, were likely the last straw for many educators who have chosen to retire or resign. **Lawmakers should continue to refine these programs in the upcoming legislative session to reduce the burdens on teachers and mandate that teachers be paid for any additional required time; and must ensure that when any new proposals are considered, they will be implemented in a manner that will avoid increasing teacher workloads.**

ⁱ TEACHER SHORTAGES, WORKFORCE ISSUES DEMAND BOLDER SOLUTIONS FROM STATES
January 11, 2022 <https://www.sreb.org/blog-post/teacher-shortages-workforce-issues-demand-bolder-solutions-states>

Job-Related Stress Threatens the Teacher Supply
Key Findings from the 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey
<https://www.rand.org/news/press/2021/06/15.html>

The pandemic's toll on educators has made Texas' teacher shortage worse
Teachers report being spread thin by the demands of remote learning and exhausted by the constant health concerns, Sept. 9, 2021 <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/09/texas-teachers-shortage-covid-19/>

The Texas teacher exodus explained: Why teachers are feeling stressed and burned out
Austin American-Statesman. March 28, 2022 <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2022/03/28/why-texas-teachers-quitting-their-jobs-stress-burnout-abbott-task-force-education-agency/7154921001/>

ⁱⁱ Hoglund, W. L. G., Klinge, K. E., & Hosan, N. E. (2015). Classroom risks and resources: Teacher burnout, classroom quality and children's adjustment in high needs elementary schools. *Journal of School Psychology*, 53(5), 337-357
<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/science/article/pii/S002244051500031X>

ⁱⁱⁱ Encouraging More High School Students to Consider Teaching By: Michelle Croft, Gretchen Guffy, and Dan Vitale, June 2018, <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/pdfs/Encouraging-More-HS-Students-to-Consider-Teaching.pdf>

^{iv} Greenberg, M. T., Brown J. L., Abenavoli, R.M. (2016). "Teacher Stress and Health Effects on Teachers, Students, and Schools." Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University.
https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2016/rwjf430428)

^v Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B. (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Retrieved from
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b4ab/6eaa2ac83f4721044e5de193e3e2dec07ac0.pdf>

^{vi} *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."

^{vii} Coggshall, J., Mizrav, E., & Lachlan-Hache, L. (2019). Evidence-based practices to support equity: A snapshot on mentoring and induction. Washington, DC: Center on Great Teachers and Leaders.
https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/EvidenceBasedPractices_MentoringInduction.pdf

^{viii} Induction and Mentoring. Recruitment and Retention brief. Center for Teaching Quality. November 4, 2004. <http://www.teachingquality.org/pdfs/HuntInduction.pdf>

^{ix} *About Grow Your Own Programs*, New America, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/grow-your-own-educators/about>; Grow Your Own Grant Program, Texas Education Agency <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/educator-initiatives-and-performance/grow-your-own>

^x Teacher Apprenticeship: What is it and Why Now?, New America, Feb. 8, 2022 <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/teacher-apprenticeship-what-is-it-and-why-now/>

^{xi} *The Teacher Residency: An Innovative Model for Preparing Teachers*, Learning Policy Institute, Sept. 2016 [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher Residency Innovative Model Preparing Teachers REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher%20Residency%20Innovative%20Model%20Preparing%20Teachers%20REPORT.pdf)

^{xii} Geiger, T., & Pivovarov, M. (2018). The effects of working conditions on teacher retention. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(6), 604–625 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13540602.2018.1457524?scroll=top&needAccess=true>;
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^{xiii} Berry, B., Bastian, K. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Kini, T. (2021). *The importance of teaching and learning conditions: Influences on teacher retention and school performance in North Carolina*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/leandro-teaching-and-learning-conditions-brief>

^{xiv} *The Mathematics and Science Teacher Shortage: Fact and Myth*, By Richard M. Ingersoll and David Perda, University of Pennsylvania, March, 2009, CPRE Research Report #RR-62
https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=cpre_researchreports

^{xv} *ON THE PATH TO EQUITY: IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS*, Alliance for Excellent Education, July, 2014 (pg 10) <https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf>; Ohio: <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Equity/TELL-Ohio/TELL-main-survey.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>; Tennessee: <http://tn.gov/education/topic/educator-survey>