Education Research Center
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The 2024 Texas Traditional Public School Teacher Workforce Report

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Executive Summary

The mission of the Texas public education system is to prepare every child for success in college, a career, or the military (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2022). As classroom teachers are a well-documented key factor in supporting student success (Chetty et al., 2014; Goldhaber et al., 2015), fulfilling the mission of the Texas public education system requires that a high-quality classroom teacher population be sustained. However, Texas, like most states across the nation, struggles to attract and retain teachers.

In Texas, challenges with recruitment and retention prompted Governor Greg Abbott to form the Teacher Vacancy Task Force in March 2022 to investigate teacher workforce issues and provide recommendations for improvement (TEA, 2023). The task force acknowledged that amid decreasing student enrollment, traditional public schools were increasingly hiring uncertified teachers, offering salaries that failed to keep up with inflation, and experiencing increased teacher attrition. To improve the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, the task force recommended improving compensation packages, providing training and support, and improving working conditions for teachers (TEA, 2023). In order to sustain a teacher workforce to drive the burgeoning state economy, Texas must act quickly to correct the course of the teaching profession.

The purpose of this report is to detail the ways in which the Texas traditional public school teacher workforce has changed over the past decade. Using the data repository housed at the University of Houston Education Research Center (UH ERC), this report has two major findings:

Compared with the teacher population a decade ago, the Texas traditional public school classroom teacher population has less pre-classroom preparation and fewer standard teacher certifications, teaches courses across more subjects, earns less, and is more likely to leave the classroom for a career outside of public education.

These trends in traditional public school classroom teacher population compound the long-standing concerns of racial and ethnic representation, as well as socioeconomic inequality in the Texas public school system.

Synthesizing the findings of this report within the context of Texas education policy and academic literature, we offer two policy recommendations for the public school sector:

Restore teacher certification requirements and increase university-based teacher preparation program participation and completion.

Invest in public school finance equalization, reform teacher pay scales, and oppose policies that direct tax-payer dollars outside of the public school system.

Classroom teachers lie at the heart of the public education system. In order to support the education of our children, the state of the teaching profession—which in recent years has faced a downward trajectory—must be restored. State and national policy efforts to reduce barriers to entry into the classroom may have contributed to a waterfall effect of declining prestige in the teaching profession. The prestige of an occupation, or the respect and standing of an occupation, is elevated or depressed by the influence and power of the profession, the attributes of individuals in the profession, and the amount of resources society allocates to the profession (Hodge et al, 1964; Kraft & Lyon, 2024). Reestablishing the prestige of the teaching profession is an evidence-based approach to buttressing the public education system and begins with strong teacher preparation and certification pathways advocated in this report