



# On Target

AFT Local #2569

## April 2019



Clarence Teachers Make the Difference



BLOG > BETTER CONVERSATION

## Betsy DeVos Wants Larger Class Sizes and Fewer Teachers

POSTED MAR. 28, 2019 IN BETTER CONVERSATION

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In our society, there are so many hot takes offered each day that it's almost impossible for any single statement to cut through the clutter. As a result, these hot takes can be taken as truth and fact because of the absence of challenging viewpoints. However, sometimes, the rare statement makes us pause for a double take and demands a response. This week, one of those statements came directly from the halls of the U.S. Congress.

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, in attempting to justify a budget that would cut federal education spending by more than 10 percent, **made a claim** that stopped me in my tracks:

*Students may be better served by being in larger classes, if by hiring fewer teachers, a district or state can better compensate those who have demonstrated high ability and outstanding results.*

If you're like me, you probably needed to read that statement twice to make sure you were reading it correctly. But after that second reading, let me confirm that you read correctly—a U.S. Secretary of Education suggested to Congress that our education system could *benefit* from having *fewer* teachers in our classrooms.

## DOING MORE WITH LESS

Teachers are used to being asked to do more with less, but this is a step beyond. In an environment where states are struggling to **find enough teachers to simply fill vacancies**, you would think this statement would be too outlandish to require a rebuttal. However, because of the presence of **some research** showing that smaller class sizes may have “at best a small effect” on student achievement, the argument that “class size doesn’t matter” has more than a few adherents in policy conversations.

But, here’s a simple truth known by anyone who has ever spent time teaching—class size matters and smaller is better. For starters, smaller class sizes allow teachers to better personalize instruction, something **routinely cited** as best practice. The ability to better personalize with smaller class size is a function of basic math.

For example, this year I have six fewer students in my AP Government class. During class discussion, this means each student has an additional half minute daily to share their thoughts. During independent work, this means I can spend an extra half minute with each student.

An additional 30 seconds may not sound like much, but over the course of a school year, that could add up to nearly three full days of additional in-class, personalized attention—not to mention my greater capacity to provide more individual attention outside of class time. While funding may be scarce in schools, time is even harder to find, and we should jealously guard any condition that allows students to receive more personalized instruction.

## A FORMULA FOR BURNOUT

Smaller class size is essential to prevent teacher burnout. As **teachers in my home state have shared** repeatedly with legislators, large class sizes wear down teachers and drive them out of the profession. As I’ve **written about in the past**, the job of a teacher has changed drastically over the past decade, in large part due to the movement to incorporate more instructional practices grounded in mastery learning.

These practices are right for students, but they also require far more time to implement because of the need to provide effective feedback, remediation and re-teach concepts. Simply put, it’s impossible to deliver this type of instruction with increased class sizes. Policymakers can opt to increase the number of students in a class, but teachers can’t decide to increase the number of hours in the day to meet the needs of students.

## SMALLER CLASSES ARE MORE EFFECTIVE CLASSES

As the secretary noted in her statement to Congress, class size reduction is an intervention that **numerous school districts** around the country have selected as a way to support effective instruction. One key vehicle for class size reduction efforts is funding through Title II, a program that is targeted to support lower-income areas and one the president has **proposed to eliminate** for the third consecutive year. The rich irony is that this is an administration that speaks repeatedly about the importance of increasing local control over education, but, when it comes to class size reduction, the argument is apparently, “Washington knows best.”

To cover for this inconsistency, the president’s budget justifications note that local districts can use other federal revenue streams, like Title I, to fund activities currently financed through Title II, but this is spurious logic. To illustrate, I’ll use an analogy that will resonate far too deeply with the nearly **1 in 5 teachers** with second jobs.

By the administration’s logic, these teachers don’t really need the income from a second job to pay for utilities and basic needs. Instead, they can just use the income from their first job to pay the bills. As any teacher can tell you, this argument fails because the income from the first job was never enough to cover basic costs, which is exactly the same for school districts where **well over 80 percent of funds** are spent on salaries, benefits and utilities.

Federal funds may only account for about **10 percent of K-12 school spending** in America, but to say that cuts in federal spending can be covered by simply reallocating other federal funds assumes that those other funds are being used on unnecessary costs—and that is a false claim. While increased spending efficiencies could certainly be achieved, any district would be hard-pressed to offset the level of cuts proposed by the president without negatively impacting services to students.

In spite of all these problems, there is a central grain of truth in the secretary’s statement that I applaud. By implication, the secretary acknowledged that increasing teacher pay is essential to retain the best talent in our profession. However, instead of eliminating teaching positions and overburdening remaining teachers, the appropriate application of the secretary’s logic is simply this: If our nation is truly committed to investing in the educational experience of all students, the starting place is to provide all teachers with the salary and support needed to attract more talented individuals to this incredible profession.

Sometimes, less is more, but nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to the number of quality teachers in our schools.



# Average Teacher Salary Down 4.5 percent, NEA Report Finds

*The annual Rankings & Estimates report paints stark picture for students, educators*

WASHINGTON - April 29, 2019 -

The national average teacher salary, adjusted for inflation, has decreased 4.5 percent over the past decade, reveals the annual NEA Rankings and Estimates: Ranking of the States 2018 and Estimates of School Statistics 2019. Released this week, the report's findings underscore why educators from Arizona to California to Texas and beyond have united in a national #RedforEd movement to advocate for the resources and learning conditions that help all students succeed.

"Across the nation educator pay continues to erode, expanding the large pay gap between what teachers earn and what similarly educated and experienced professionals in other fields earn," said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. "Educators don't do this work to get rich, they do this work because they believe in students. But their pay is not commensurate with the dedication and expertise they bring to the profession."

NEA also collects data on teacher starting salaries and every year, the data show that starting teacher salaries are too low and, for the last decade, still lower than pre-Recession levels. This year is no different. The 2017-18 average teacher starting salary is \$39,249. After adjusting for inflation, beginning teacher salaries have decreased by 2.91 percent in the last decade.

The states where teachers have lost the most ground include Wisconsin and Michigan, where Scott Walker and Rick Snyder gutted bargaining rights and stripped union protections. Both governors were voted out last election. Teacher



pay also has dropped dramatically in Indiana, where lawmakers require school districts to replace objective salary schedules with harmful merit pay systems.

Teachers are paid **21.4% percent less** than similarly educated and experienced professionals, according to a recent Economic Policy Institute (EPI) report, which found that the “teacher pay gap” reached a record high in 2018. This difference between teacher pay and other college-educated professionals’ pay is partly due to the persistent gender gap in wages—across all full-time jobs in the U.S., women earn about 80 percent of men’s salaries. Historically, teaching has been a profession made up mostly of women. Today, 76.6 percent of educators are women.

The report also reveals that 63 percent of reported public school districts still offer a starting salary below \$40,000. Nearly 300 districts pay first-year teachers less than \$30,000 a year. And it’s not just first-year teachers: in some states, teachers will never earn professional pay. In 1,025 school districts, even the highest paid teachers, most with advanced degrees and decades of experience in the classroom, are paid less than \$50,000.

“How can we recruit and retain quality teachers for our students if we don’t pay them what they’re worth?” asked Eskelsen García. “It is time to show respect to those professionals who dedicate their lives to students and building the future of our communities. Professional work deserves professional pay.”

The NEA report provides comparative state data and national averages on a host of important public education statistics, teacher salaries, student enrollment, and revenue and expenditures for the most recent school year.

Highlights from this year’s report and NEA’s salary data:

### **Teacher Salary**

- The national average teacher salary increased from \$59,539 in 2016-17 to \$60,477 in 2017-18.
- Average teacher salaries in 2017-18 ranged from a high of \$84,227 in New York to a low of \$44,926 in Mississippi.
- If one does not adjust for inflation, the national average teacher salary has increased by 11.2 percent since 2008-09. However, after adjusting for inflation, the national average teacher salary has decreased by 4.5 percent over the past decade.
- Sixty-three percent of reported public school districts still offer a starting salary below \$40,000.

### **Expenditure per Student**

- The U.S. average per-student expenditure in 2017–18, based on fall enrollment, was \$12,602. The following states had the highest per-student expenditures:

New York (\$23,894), District of Columbia (\$21,001), and New Jersey (\$20,171). Idaho (\$6,809), Utah (\$7,187), and Arizona (\$8,123) had the lowest.

- In 2018-19, expenditures per student are projected to increase by 2.5 percent to \$12,920, up from \$12,602 in 2017-18. This compares with a 2.7 percent increase in total current expenditures.
- Over the last decade, the average per-student expenditure has risen by 20.6 percent from \$10,715 to \$12,920. After inflation adjustment, the expenditure per student in enrollment has increased by 3.3 percent.

## **School Revenues**

- School funding continues to be state and local oriented. In 2016-17, 47.0 percent of public school revenue came from state funds, while 47.1 percent came from state funds in 2017-18. Local funds contributed similar percentages in both 2016-17 (45.1 percent) and 2017-18 (45.4 percent). In those two years, federal funds constituted 7.9 percent and 7.5 percent, respectively, of K-12 education revenue.

“If we’re serious about every child’s future, let’s get serious about doing what works,” said Eskelsen García. “We cannot recruit and retain the committed, qualified educators that students deserve without making a major investment in raising salaries. In order to ensure that every student has a qualified teacher in the classroom and caring professionals in schools, we must make a better investment in our educators.”

**Upon release of the reports on Monday, NEA will also be launching an interactive map that allows users to scroll over individual states and see individual state data and rankings. This will live at <http://neatoday.org/redford/#map>**

NEA has produced the *Rankings and Estimates* report for more than 70 years. The complete report can be found at <http://www.nea.org/home/44479.htm>

*Technical note: Rankings data come primarily through collaborative efforts with state Departments of Education. Estimates are determined through recognized statistical analysis procedures, as presented in the methodology section of the report.*

Follow us on twitter at [www.twitter.com/NEAMedia](http://www.twitter.com/NEAMedia)

# # #

*The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.*

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- Another Strike



By NIKKI BATTISTE CBS NEWS April 11, 2019, 6:39 PM

## Sacramento teachers fight for "what's right" with strike

Teachers in Sacramento went on strike Thursday for the first time in 30 years. They're accusing the school district of backtracking on promises of better pay and smaller classes.

In the past year, more than 400,000 teachers in nine states have gone on strike, affecting more than 5 million children.

Raising three boys on her own in costly California is a daily struggle for Victoria Carr, who has been teaching for 12 years.

"It's hard. It really is. Am I making a difference? Is it impacting people," she said.

With teachers on the brink of a strike, Carr went to a school board meeting to confront the district superintendent.

"I want them to see me fight for what's right. I want my students to know that they're important enough to me that I'll fight for them and I'll say what needs to be said as best I can," said the seventh-grade teacher.



Nationwide, the average teacher salary has decreased by 4 percent in the past decade, when accounting for inflation. Eighteen months ago, the Sacramento School District avoided a strike by giving their teachers a raise. Thursday's strike is solely about the students. The teachers say the district did not hold up the rest of that deal, which included smaller classroom sizes, more nurses, psychologists and after school programs.

- Teachers on strike: "Public schools everywhere get shortchanged"
- "We have to make the sacrifice": L.A. families stand in solidarity with teacher strike

The starting pay for Sacramento teachers remains at \$44,000 a year. Last year, superintendents in the area made between \$290,000 and \$330,000 per year.

CBS News spoke to Sacramento superintendent Jorge Aguilar, who makes \$295,000, and asked if he's willing to take a pay cut.

"At this point, everything is on the table," Aguilar said.

He said the district has a \$35 million deficit.

"We're obviously working feverishly to figure out if there's any other places where we can create more efficiencies, live a little bit longer without some services and resources for our employees," Aguilar said.

Sacramento school board president Jessie Ryan said the problems they're having in Sacramento are not unique to the area.

"I think we have to look at how we're investing as a state, how we're investing as a country," Ryan said.

Veteran teachers like Carr who make about \$79,000 a year say the strike will grow in size if their demands are ignored.

"If we have to come out again, we will," she said.

Her message to other teachers across the country is to keep going.

"It's a hard, long battle," Carr said. "But keep going. Keep fighting. It's worth it. Our kids are worth it. Your kids are worth it."

# Fact-Checking the Commissioner

Source: NYSUT Research and Educational Services



## FACT-CHECKING THE ~~C~~OMMISSIONER

Learn more, share your story and take action at [CorrectTheTests.com](https://www.correctthetests.com).

New York State's learning standards expect students to be able to verify the accuracy of factual statements, yet Commissioner Elia this week sent a misleading letter on grades 3-8 testing that requires a closer look.

Here's Elia's full email, with NYSUT's take in red.

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**FROM: MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner of Education**  
**SUBJECT: Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) Tests**

Dear Teachers and Administrators,

As you know, the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) tests will be administered to students across the state next week, and the Grades 3-8 Mathematics tests will be administered in early May. These annual ELA and math tests for students in grades 3-8 are required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The tests are designed to measure how well

students are mastering the learning standards that guide classroom instruction and help to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills needed for success in college and the modern workplace. The tests also show how schools and districts are progressing with the learning standards and can support professional development for teachers.

**✗ NYSUT response: Because of the lack of movement by SED on NYSUT's suggested changes to the testing system, the current tests do not provide any useful information to parents or teachers or any real information on how a district is performing. The results do not accurately predict future student success. In fact, the tests mislabel more than half of the test takers as failing, while more than 80 percent of students go on to graduate from high school. The results of the current tests are not only useless, but also damaging to students.**

Since assuming my role as New York's Commissioner of Education almost four years ago, I have traveled all over the state listening to concerns from educators and parents about the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. I believe teachers are a critical component in creating quality assessments that match our learning standards. That's why we have made substantive changes with teachers guiding our work. As a result, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the Board of Regents made significant changes to the tests, beginning in 2016. Below you will find information about the 2019 tests, including a summary of the changes.

**Fewer Test Sessions and Questions.** Like the 2018 tests, the 2019 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests are two sessions each. With fewer test sessions, each test will have substantially fewer questions than in recent years, lessening test fatigue for students and better enabling them to demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

**✗ NYSUT response: Unfortunately fewer test days has not translated into a proportionate reduction in the number of questions. While reducing one day from each test, the state did not reduce the equivalent number of questions, leading to third-grade students spending more time on these tests than high school students spend on Regents exams.**

**Greater Teacher Involvement.** Teachers from across the state serve on committees to write, select and evaluate questions for the tests. Hundreds of New York State educators were involved in creating and reviewing questions for the 2019 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests and selecting the questions for the

test forms. This year, New York State teachers reviewed all questions for inclusion on the assessments at least six times.

**✗ NYSUT response: The numbers of teachers involved in this process are too few to properly represent the diversity of New York State. Asking two teachers per grade level, as done by SED, to make the decisions about what to include on a test is simply not enough to produce a fair test for the entire state. In order for the process to be fair and equitable, more teachers from each grade are needed.**

**Faster Results for Teachers.** Like the previous three years, NYSED plans to return instructional reports to teachers and schools by the end of the school year and to release at least 75% of the test questions. This is one of the highest release rates in the country.

**✗ NYSUT response: The reports are still too late to impact school programs and all of the questions should be released just like the high school Regents exams.**

**Untimed Tests.** Like the 2016-2018 tests, the 2019 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests will be untimed. In general, this means that as long as students are working productively, they will have as much time as they need to complete each test session, within the confines of the regular school day. Schools and districts have discretion to allow students to read silently or quietly exit the room when they have completed their test while others continue to work.

**✗ NYSUT response: This change in timing combined with the longer daily tests has led to students spending hours completing the tests. The length of the tests must be reduced to ensure students are not spending all day working on them.**

**Improved Resources for Parents.** The 2019 Score Reports for parents will feature more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. In addition, updated parent resources about the 2019 tests are available on our assessment website. The resources have important information about what parents need to know about the 2019 assessments and answer many frequently asked questions about the tests. The 2019 parent fact sheet and FAQ are also available in several additional languages, including Chinese (Simplified), Haitian Creole, Russian, and Spanish.

**✗ NYSUT response: Simply posting resources on a website does not mean parents will have access to these resources. As with the commissioner's email, we have concerns about the accuracy of the**

**information provided by SED and the methods by which that information is shared.**

**Computer-Based Testing.** Some schools have chosen to administer the 2019 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on computers rather than by paper and pencil. The computer-based tests (CBT) will have the same questions as the paper versions. Students in those schools utilizing the CBT option have access to CBT practice tests and most have had prior experience participating in other computer-based tests in ELA and Math. The long-term plan is for all schools to use CBT for annual state tests. CBT has the potential to further reduce the need for stand-alone field tests and make assessments better instructional tools for students with disabilities.

**✗ NYSUT response: CBT implementation has been a disaster. NYSUT received numerous reports of tests being lost after students had finished and students being required to re-take the test. Administering a test to students in grades 3-5 means we are testing their keyboarding skills not their knowledge of the subject. SED's implementation of CBT should slow down until they can answer all the questions regarding student performance on these tests.**

I hope these resources and information are helpful. We will continue to improve our assessments with the help of great education professionals from across the state.

**✗ NYSUT response: This letter fails to address the biggest problem with the grades 3-8 state tests, the benchmarks used to set cut scores for the tests. When the benchmarks were set for the common core state tests, the cuts were set too high and it has led to the state telling too many students they are failures from third grade to eighth grade — and then they pass the Regents exams and graduate at a very high rate. The data produced by the current grades 3-8 state tests are flawed and do not accurately reflect student performance nor do they reliably predict performance on the Regents exams. Until the benchmarks are reset, these tests will never be useful to parents or teachers and will continue to mislabel students. All of the other changes will fail to produce a useful test if the benchmarks are not reset.**

Sincerely,  
MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner of Education



## Editor's Note

Each month the On Target will come out near the end of the month.

If you have something that you would like included, please send as a Word document by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to:

[lpunek@clarenceschools.org](mailto:lpunek@clarenceschools.org)

Items that could be included are: Articles dealing with education/unions, Good ideas for teaching, something humorous/light dealing with education, Information for sharing, Opinion pieces on education, Advertisement for a service you provide.

Thank you,  
Lisa Panek

## • The Lighter Side



## Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

**If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately via 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741).**

Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs. Do not be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. Never take warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

### Risk Factors



- Hopelessness
- Non-suicidal self injury (e.g., cutting)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Prior suicide among peers or family members
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Presence of a firearm in the home

### Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., "I want to die") and indirect (e.g., "I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up") statements
- Suicide notes, plans, online postings
- Making final arrangements
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about death
- Sudden unexplained happiness
- Increased risk taking
- Heavy drug/alcohol use

### What to Do



- Remain calm, nonjudgmental and listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking about suicide").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don't say, "You aren't going to do anything stupid are you?").
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- **Get help!** Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell an appropriate caregiving adult. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.

### Reminders for Parents



After a school notifies a parent of their child's risk for suicide and provides referral information, parents must:

- **Continue to take threats seriously.** Follow through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent "they didn't mean it."
- **Access school supports.** If parents are uncomfortable with following through on referrals, they can give the school psychologist permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- **Maintain communication with school.** After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up supports. Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.

April 16, 2019

# APPR: What you need to know about new teacher evaluation legislation

Source: NYSUT Communications



NYSUT's long-awaited legislation to fix the state's broken teacher evaluation system has been signed into law as part of the 2019-20 state budget.

New York State assessment scores will no longer have to be included in teacher ratings. Instead, all Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) decisions will be subject to local collective bargaining.

For students, the law prohibits districts from including grade 3-8 state test scores in students' permanent records. Enactment of this law means students and teachers will be better protected from high-stakes tests.

The following is an overview of the new APPR provisions, highlighting what the law does and does not do; [consult our Fact Sheet for more detailed information](#).

## Here's what the law does:

1. The law eliminates the state growth model from section 3012-d of the education law. Teacher growth scores will no longer be calculated by the state after this year.
2. It also removes the requirement to use state tests in APPR. This change includes the state's grade 3-8 ELA and Math tests; grade 4 and 8 science tests; the NYSESLAT; the Alternate Assessment for students with disabilities; and high school Regents exams. Locals that still want to include any of these state test results in their APPR plan may negotiate it.

3. The law places decisions on how to measure student performance at the bargaining table. This means all of APPR will be subject to collective bargaining. Districts will not be making these decisions unilaterally.
4. The law ensures every local can continue to use its current transition APPR plan. There is no pressure to negotiate immediately.
5. The law also allows all teachers to be covered by group measures — removing the high-stakes nature of individual Student Learning Objectives, or SLOs. We believe most locals will use this approach, which will actually reduce testing by eliminating pre-tests. No one will have to increase testing to comply with this law.

### **Here's what the law does not do:**

1. The law does not give any new authority to the Commissioner, and it makes sure she cannot backtrack on any of the measures she has already approved. A full repeal of the law would have given her full authority to put a new system in place. Given her interest in preserving the state growth model, and including a percentage of state tests in evaluations, we believe any system designed by the Commissioner would be much worse than the system in this new law.
2. The Commissioner does not have the authority to mandate a new test. She can approve new negotiated measures submitted by districts.
3. District administrators cannot unilaterally impose performance measures that will be used for APPR. Under the law, performance measures and their use must be collectively bargained.
4. No changes were made to the observation portion of the APPR; this remains subject to collective bargaining.
5. No changes were made to the appeals process or 3020-a/b proceedings.

### **What's next?**

**No immediate action is necessary.** The new language keeps your current transition APPR plan in place until a new plan is agreed to at the bargaining table, with no threat of losing state aid.

Local union leaders are encouraged to analyze their current plans and see how it is working for members. Negotiating a new plan under the amended language may give local unions the opportunity to make adjustments and eliminate individual SLO's for teachers that were required to have one. The new law eliminates the two-tier system where teachers in "tested" subjects must have individual SLO's or growth scores and teachers in "non-tested" subjects have individual or group SLO's. Group measures for student growth may now be used for all teachers.

04/21/2019

# The Freedom to Teach

by Randi Weingarten

President, American Federation of Teachers

Ask any teacher why she entered the profession, and she's likely to talk about inspiring and nurturing students, cultivating their potential and promoting joy in learning. Ask her how she feels about teaching today, and you're likely to get a reaction ranging from exasperation to tears. We are in the midst of a crisis that is destroying the soul of teaching and hollowing out the teaching profession.



Weingarten speaking about the crisis in teaching at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., April 18.

Teachers and other school employees are at the [highest rate](#) on record—nearly 300,000 each year, two-thirds before retirement age. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs plummeted 38 percent nationally between 2008 and 2015. There were 110,000 [fewer teachers](#) than needed in the last school year. All 50 states started the last school year with [teacher shortages](#). And schools serving majorities of students of color and students living in poverty experience the [highest teacher turnover](#) rates.



The financial consequences of this constant churn are steep—more than \$2 billion annually, according to a conservative estimate. And losing so many educators' experience and expertise has an enormous negative impact on students' education.

More than 100,000 classrooms across the country have an instructor who is [not credentialed](#). How many operating rooms do you think are staffed by people without the necessary qualifications? Or airplane cockpits? Why are we doing this to our kids?

This is an alarming and growing crisis. It has two major roots: deep disinvestment from public education and the deprofessionalization of teaching. America must confront both.

The teacher uprisings of the last two years have laid bare the frustration over insufficient resources, deplorable facilities, and inadequate pay and benefits for educators. This disinvestment is often a choice—to cut funds for public schools to finance tax cuts for corporations and the super-rich or to siphon funds for privatization. Twenty-five [states spend less](#) on public education than they did a decade ago. [Public school facilities got a D+](#) from the American Society of Civil Engineers. That means thousands of schools are outdated, unsafe, and unfit, and are making people sick. The lack of resources is literally a matter of life and death. A child in Philadelphia died after suffering an asthma attack in a school without a nurse on duty.

In 38 states, [teacher salaries are lower](#) than before the Great Recession. Teachers are paid 24 percent less than other college graduates. The stories are all too common of teachers working two or three additional jobs, and even selling their blood plasma, just to get by. They're getting squeezed in both directions: lower income and higher expenses for things like healthcare and student loans.

Teachers' dissatisfaction stems not just from underfunding and disgraceful school conditions; they are frustrated and demoralized by deprofessionalization that strips them of their freedom to teach. In recent focus groups, teachers across the country spoke about entering teaching excited, optimistic and determined to make a difference in their students' lives. And they spoke with equally deep emotion about the stress and disrespect they soon experienced.

It's things like being told to teach according to a set pacing calendar, even if students need more time. It's getting in trouble for allowing students to

continue a debate over two days, instead of one. It's being treated as "test preparation managers," as one teacher put it, and "drowning in a sea of paperwork," as another said—data collection, data entry and data reporting. And, too often, top-down control trumps all else. That hurts students, and it demoralizes teachers.

It's not rocket science to see that the United States needs to reverse course. Through the [AFT Fund Our Future](#) campaign, teachers throughout the country are fighting for adequate investment in public education—from school levies and sufficient state support to full funding of Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

And we are focusing on things we can legislate and negotiate to make teaching a profession marked by trust, respect and the freedom to teach. That starts by focusing on three essential areas: developing a culture of collaboration in schools and districts, creating and maintaining proper teaching and learning conditions, and ensuring teachers have voice and agency befitting their profession. These are pragmatic actions that schools and districts could start work on tomorrow.

If we want our public schools to be all we hope, if we want to attract and retain a new generation of wonderful teachers to educate the nation's children, this cannot be solely a teacher issue or a teacher union issue. We must act, and act together.

*More information about the crisis in the teaching profession, and how to address it, is at [aft.org/freedomtoteach](http://aft.org/freedomtoteach).*

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It's been a while since I've done a give-away. The first 3 people to respond via email with the book title this picture is from will get a lottery ticket!

[lpunek@clarenceschools.org](mailto:lpunek@clarenceschools.org)





## Exterior House Painting

Todd Banaszak  
Clarence Middle School  
Physical Education Teacher  
**25 years of Experience**  
**553-0302**

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Painting  
(trim, siding, shake shingle, stucco etc..)  
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