

Association of Texas Professional Educators

305 E. Huntland Dr., Suite 300, Austin, TX 78752
(800) 777-ATPE • (512) 467-0071 • www.atpe.org

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Media contact: Adam Rondeau

arondeau@atpe.org

Teacher turnover costing school districts millions

AUSTIN – Teacher turnover is costing Texas school districts millions of dollars each year, the state’s largest educators’ group told a group of lawmakers serving on the Select Committee on School Finance Weights, Allotments and Adjustments.

Representatives from 115,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators testified today that school districts could save an estimated \$500 million associated with teacher attrition by establishing a state-funded educator mentor and induction program that is mandatory for all new teachers.

“This is going to be a very difficult year for many school districts, but there are some very simple steps the state can take to ensure that our zeal to fund schools doesn’t diminish our children’s education,” said Josh Sanderson, an ATPE lobbyist. “We’ve supplied the committee a number of recommendations that will save both the state and school districts millions of dollars annually.”

Texas already has functional models for state-funded educator mentoring programs, but the programs have never been mandatory. At the state level, Texas began experimenting with mentoring and induction programs with the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), a three-year pilot program that was lauded for its positive impact on teacher retention rates. In spite of its success, after federal grant money for the program ran out, the state never provided funding to take TxBESS to full scale statewide. The Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) program was created in 2006. A 2009 evaluation of the program found that participating districts experienced increases in beginning teacher retention by as much as 30 percent. Although mandating a statewide mentoring program would require an initial investment of resources, doing so would save the state, school districts and taxpayers significant sums over time.

“Research has shown that focusing on staff development and having a quality mentoring program will provide a concrete reduction in a district’s personnel costs,” said Sanderson. “Coupled with the proven benefits to student performance and the ease it would be for the state to enact such reforms, it makes sense for the state to invest a strong and comprehensive induction plan for all new teachers.”

In written testimony, ATPE also cautioned the committee against removing state-mandated class-size limits and weakening educators' contract rights, warning that such moves would actually increase the operating costs districts would incur.

“The benefits of a smaller class size have been thoroughly researched and well documented, and we should be moving toward optimizing our class-size ratio, not away from it,” said Sanderson. “The idea that increasing the current class-size limit will decrease costs is really a faulty premise at best because it fails to take into account that smaller class sizes have a positive correlation with classroom management and teacher attrition.”

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The 115,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators is the largest educators' group in Texas and the largest nonunion educators' group nationwide. Its membership consists of classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators. ATPE is committed to advocating for better benefits for all educators, promoting a collaborative work environment and the right of educators to choose the association they feel represents their interests, and providing the best education possible for all Texas school children.