



Support for SB 3

Relating to additional funding to school districts
for classroom teacher salaries

Submitted by Tonja Gray, ATPE State Vice President

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Representing the **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)**, I appreciate this opportunity to offer our written input on Senate Bill (SB) 3 by Sen. Jane Nelson.

Research has consistently shown that placement with an effective teacher is the most important in-school factor for student achievement. Texas needs a reliable supply of excellent educators. Nearly one in three new teachers hired in 2012 completely left the profession within five years, and compensation is a factor, along with difficult working conditions and inadequate teacher preparation. ATPE supports improving compensation levels for all Texas educators so that we can recruit and retain the best teachers for our students.

The average Texas teacher earns about \$7,000 less than the national average, and salaries for many of our state's teachers are even lower. In many cases, modest, incremental raises have failed to keep pace with rising healthcare costs, causing teachers to take home less pay each year despite their increasing value and experience. Legislators have an opportunity this session to address the issue of inadequate compensation that is exacerbating our costly teacher turnover problem.

Teachers should receive a professional level of base compensation that will increase over time as they become more seasoned and effective in the classroom. Benefits such as affordable healthcare and a secure retirement are also important for recruiting and retaining the best teachers.

During the 2017 special session, Texas educators raised concerns about a legislative proposal to require districts to provide teachers with a one-time bonus without providing additional state funding to cover the cost. ATPE greatly appreciates that legislators heard our concerns and brought back a plan this session to provide a substantial, state-funded, permanent salary increase for all classroom teachers.

We also greatly appreciate lawmakers' willingness to bring ATPE to the table as a valued stakeholder. Our goal is to work with all parties to advance positive solutions for Texas students and teachers within a comprehensive school finance reform package that we hope to see enacted this session.

There is currently a false debate between raising base compensation for all and offering differentiated compensation to a select group of teachers. This need not be an either-or proposition, but if lawmakers want high-quality candidates to consider teaching as a profession, then they must first prioritize giving teachers a professional level of base compensation when addressing compensation issues. Any differentiated pay programs should be implemented *in addition to* across-the-board improvements to compensation for all. SB 3 would provide a good starting point and allow room for additional differentiated pay in districts that choose to implement such a program.

Finally, educating children is a team effort. Auxiliary staff should be able to make a living wage, too, and ATPE supports measures that would give districts the necessary additional funding to provide a meaningful salary increase to support staff not currently covered by SB 3.

I am pleased to support SB 3, and I thank Chairwoman Nelson and her colleagues for considering our input as they debate the important issue of educator pay. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.