

TESTIMONY
2016 Special Session
August 2, 2016
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gail Schauer and I am the Director in the Office of Teacher & School Effectiveness for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide information on teacher shortages in North Dakota.

Teacher shortages have been a concern for many years and each year the concern grows more serious. During the 2015-2016 school year, there were 204 teacher openings that were unfilled. A year ago in June 2015, Superintendent Baesler assembled a task force to compile and analyze data related to teacher shortages and explore potential solutions.

In my report today, I will go over some of the data that this task force reviewed, discuss how schools are coping as best they can, and talk about some of the suggested solutions the task force discussed.

The task force reviewed some interesting facts. First they looked at which content areas had the highest need for teachers. These content areas were career and technical education (35 openings), social studies (32 openings), special education (28 openings), and business education (20 openings).

The regions in the state with the highest needs were the rural areas. The larger cities are able to provide better pay and better benefits. The rural areas struggle more to recruit highly qualified teachers. If rural schools are able to recruit, they have a difficult time retaining them.

Perception data was collected with three surveys; 1) students enrolled in a North Dakota education program, 2) first year teachers, and 3) teachers that are members of the North Dakota United. The survey results indicated those who go into teaching do so mainly for three reasons; they want to make a difference, they had an example of an inspiring teacher in their lives, and they love the subject they teach.

Some of the positive responses included (results are from North Dakota United members unless otherwise stated) –

- When asked if they were satisfied with their profession, 86% indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied.
- When asked if teachers could go back and do it all over again, would they become an educator or go into another profession, 63% said they would go into education.

Other responses were not as positive. The questions included –

- Generally speaking, do you believe the public adequately respects educators? Answer: 73% of NDU members said no; 50% of student in the teacher education program said no.
- Knowing what you know now, would you encourage your child or students to go into the education profession? Answer: 58% said no.
- Have you thought about leaving the education professional and if so, why?
Answer: when looking at all those who responded –
 - 20% said no
 - 16% said because of salary and benefits
 - 14% said because of student behavior
 - 13% said because of school administration
 - 10% said because of lack of respect for the profession

Answer: When looking at teachers with 0-5 years of experience, 46% cited either salary and benefits (30%) or student behavior (16%) as their primary reason.

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) reported 141 Alternate Access Licenses issued in 2015-2016. This license is issued in a documented shortage area for those who do not have a teaching degree but do have a bachelor's degree in a content area where the vacancy exists in the school. ESPB also reported

issuing 1, 412 Interim Substitute licenses in 2015-2016. These are issued to individuals with a minimum of 48 semester hours of college coursework.

There is a lot of data available that just cannot be fit into this short report but is available for anyone interested.

With the difficulties of filling teaching positions, schools are coping in a variety of ways. Some schools are not offering specific classes because there is no highly qualified teacher to fill the position. At the beginning of this report, it states there were 204 positions not filled. Considering some schools are omitting or removing classes from their schedules because of the teacher shortage, this number would be higher if we had data on these cases.

Schools/administrators have been creative in filling teaching positions. Some options that are used are long term substitutes, creating larger classrooms, offering more electives to fill the students' schedules, allowing teacher overloads, combining grade levels, using more paraprofessionals, and using the teacher in residence.

To recruit, administrators use Job Service, career fairs, local newspaper, online employment programs, contact teacher education programs at the universities, and make college visits to meet with education students. They have also offered "low" rent for housing, provided scholarships for graduate courses, granted moving expense vouchers, and flown applicants to the state for interviews.

Many of the schools have accessed retirees. However, those retirees coming back to teacher are cautious. Many have to monitor the hours they work and/or the salary they earn so they can continue to draw their retirement while working. The number of those retired that return to education has grown. In 2014-2015 there were 314 re-employed retirees.

After reviewing a plethora of data, the task force members developed a list of solutions:

- A statewide marketing campaign promoting the teaching profession
- Expanding the loan forgiveness and signing bonus programs in terms of visibility and ability to pay more student loans in exchange for service in a high need area (i.e., rural schools)
- Compensation of student teachers
- Develop a teaching pathway for high school students
- Enhance school climate and culture
- Develop a pool of 'traveling' teachers similar to traveling nurses to incentivize working in high need areas (i.e., rural schools)

The task force held lengthy discussions and carefully considered possibilities. They narrowed their focus to two solutions to recommend to State Superintendent Baesler and the Education Standards and Practices Board. Members began preliminary action planning around 1) the statewide marketing campaign and

2) expansion of loan forgiveness, scholarship and signing bonuses programs as well as increasing teachers' salaries.

The task force is now in the process of developing a more detailed action plan to implement these solutions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.