

# TEACHERS AT WORK

## WORK ENVIRONMENT

# A DAY IN A TEACHER'S LIFE

### A Teacher's Workday

U.S. teachers work an average of 46.2 hours a week. That is a finding of the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) of lower secondary teachers (grades 7 - 9). The bulk of that time—28 hours—is spent teaching. In addition, U.S. teachers reported spending about 7 hours a week planning lessons, 5 hours grading student work and 3 hours counseling students. (*TALIS 2018 and "Teachers Around the World Say They're Satisfied With Their Jobs," Education Week, June 19, 2019*)

### Classroom Challenges

A 2013 report on teaching in the United States found that South Carolina teachers surveyed work with students of "varied learning levels and characteristics" in their classrooms.

- **99%** have at least one student who needs assistance or intervention for social, emotional or behavioral challenges.
- **76%** have student reading levels that span four or more grades.

- **66%** have students who are working two or more grades below grade level.
- **61%** have special education students in their classroom.
- **55%** have students who are gifted or who are working significantly above grade level.
- **44%** have English Language Learners in their classroom.

*("Primary Sources: America's Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change," Third Edition, Scholastic Inc. and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013.)*

In addition, the 2015-2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) found that among teachers at public, non-charter schools the following (as well as other factors) are "serious problems" in their schools:

- **29%** teach in schools where poverty is a serious problem
- **27%** teach in schools where a serious problem is students coming to school unprepared to learn.
- **22%** are in schools that lack parental involvement

In addition, only 13% of teachers strongly agree that they receive a great deal of support from parents for the work they do.

All of these percentages from the NTPS are significantly worse at high poverty schools. (*"Challenging working environments ('school climates'), especially in high-poverty schools, play a role in the teacher shortage," Economic Policy Institute, 2019.*)

## School Climate

A teacher's work environment encompasses more than classroom challenges and relationships with students and parents. A school's climate is composed of several additional areas including "relationships between teachers and administrators, school safety, the institutional environment and the school improvement process."

The 2015-16 NTPS found that about half of teachers feel fully supported by their school administration. Just under 40% of teachers find that there is a great deal of cooperation among staff members. About a third strongly agree that in their school staff members are recognized for a job well done.

Additionally, about 20% of teachers reported that they have a great deal of influence in establishing curriculum with only 11% stating they have it in determining the content of in-service professional development. (*Economic Policy Institute, 2019*)

## Job Satisfaction

The 2018 TALIS found that 90% of U.S. Teachers who participated in the survey reported that they're satisfied with their jobs. (*TALIS 2018*) Still, the NTPS survey found that almost half of all teachers had some level of dissatisfaction with being a teacher at their current school. In addition, "teacher satisfaction is lower in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools." (*Economic Policy Institute, 2019*)

Overall this is consistent with a 2013 report from a survey completed by Scholastic and the Gates Foundation. Of those surveyed in South Carolina, it found that 90% of teachers agreed that the

rewards of teaching outweigh the challenges with 98% agreeing that teaching is more than a profession.

The reasons most cited for becoming a teacher in the Scholastic/Gates survey were "to make a difference in children's lives (86%), to share their love of learning and teaching with others (75%), to help students reach their full potential (69%) and to be a part of those 'aha' moments when things 'click' for a student (65%)." (*"Primary Sources," 2013.*)

## Reasons to Leave the Profession

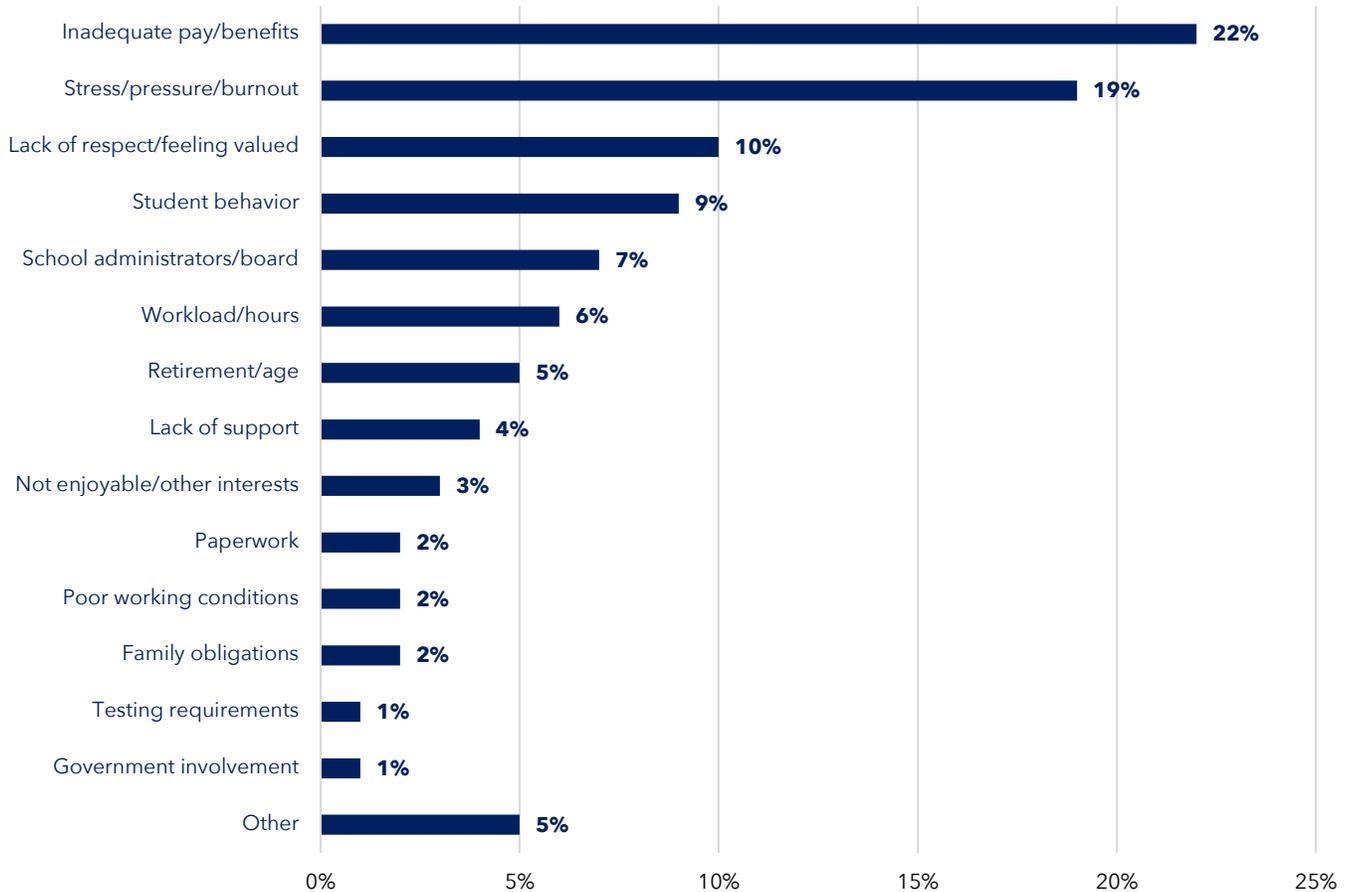
"The environment in which a teacher works has a major impact not just on job satisfaction but also on the ability to do the job well and the desire to remain in the job and the profession." (*Economic Policy Institute, 2019*)

50% of teachers say that they have considered leaving the profession in recent years according to the 2019 PDK Poll of public school teachers. This rises to 62% among teachers who say their pay is unfair or who feel undervalued by their community. Among high school teachers the percentage is 61% versus 48% in the lower grades.

As shown below, the top two main reasons for considering leaving the profession are low pay and burnout. According to the poll, 60% of all teachers, and 72% of teachers in the South say they're unfairly paid.

The third most-cited primary reason is not feeling valued by their community. (*"Frustration in the Schools," PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, September 2019*) This is consistent with the 2018 TALIS, which found that only 36% of U.S. teachers think that society values the teaching profession. (*TALIS 2018*) In the PDK poll 52% of public school teachers say their community values them a great deal, 31% feel valued "just some," and 16% feel valued "a little or not at all." (*PDK Poll, 2019*)

## Main Reasons Teachers Have Considered Leaving the Profession



Source: "Frustration in the Schools," PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, September 2019.

## Teacher Unions

There are no teacher unions in South Carolina. Teachers receive one-year contracts. No one is guaranteed a teaching position for the next year. Teachers can be dismissed with cause at any time.

## Probationary Period

Based on state performance standards, first-time teachers are formally evaluated in their second year of teaching through in-class observation, a portfolio, student achievement and written tests. (Some alternative certification teachers are evaluated in their third year.) Those that meet the standards are upgraded from an initial certificate to a professional certificate after three years of teaching.

## Teacher Re-certification

After receiving their professional certificate, teachers in South Carolina must be re-certified every five years. This requires completing some combination of graduate-level classes, South Carolina Dept. of Education or local school district certificate renewal classes or other training. A minimum of 120 renewal credits are required during each five-year period.

Teachers with less than a Master's degree must earn at least 60 of their renewal credit hours through three semester hours in graduate-level coursework within the five-year period.

Educators holding a professional certificate that expires in 2020 or beyond must earn the appropriate Read to Succeed endorsement to remain eligible for certification renewal. (*"What*

*are the requirements to renew my certificate?"  
South Carolina Department of Education)*

Greenville County Schools has additional annual professional development requirements: all teachers must participate in a minimum of 24 credit hours of professional development every year, and at least 12 of those hours are to be offered by the school/principal. (*"Professional Development Requirements," GCS Employees Website*)

## **Greenville as a Good Place to Work for Teachers**

A 2017 analysis from GoodCall ranked Greenville as the 40<sup>th</sup> best city for K-12 Teachers out of 689 cities analyzed. Ratings were based on seven measures: teacher salaries, cost of living, availability of jobs, unemployment rate, violent crime rate, prevalence of amenities, and the educational level of the population. (*"2017 Best Cities for K-12 Teachers," GoodCall, May 23, 2017.*)

A 2017 analysis by Trulia ranked Greenville as the 40<sup>th</sup> most affordable housing markets for teachers among the 93 largest metropolitan areas. In the Greenville metro area, 55% of for-sale homes were affordable for teachers according to the study. (*"Teacher, Teacher Can You Live Here? Trulia's Blog, 2017.*)