

May 21, 2018

Dear Alief ISD Family,

I realize this is the last week of the school year and we all have a million things to do before the last day of school on Friday but I wanted you to know how much the School Board and I appreciate what you do for our students.

I have been in public education for 32 years and as a former teacher, I know how hard teachers work and the incredibly long hours that teachers put in. I also know how many lives in each classroom that are touched by a great teacher. Each of our teachers has a profound impact on approximately two dozen students in each classroom. When you factor in teaching several classes for a number of years, many of our teachers have literally impacted thousands of lives.

I am proud to work for a school district that places such a high value on teaching. We work very hard to ensure that our teachers are paid among the top in the greater Houston area. We are also dedicated to providing affordable health insurance for Alief staff. When you factor in the cost of insurance premiums, Alief employees remain at the very top and take home from \$2,600 to close to \$6,000 more per year more than employees in some of our surrounding districts.

Our goal is to continue to keep our starting teacher pay among the highest while also keeping health insurance premiums at the current low levels. Since we are facing another funding shortfall from the state, this job will be extremely difficult this year but I assure you we are doing everything in our power to maintain the status of keeping our staff members at, or very near, the top in take home pay.

I am attaching an editorial from the *Houston Chronicle* to this letter. The focus of this editorial is that teachers have a lot in common with brain surgeons. I think you will enjoy reading this.

Have a great last week of school.



HD Chambers
Superintendent

Teachers and brain surgeons have a lot in common [Editorial]

May 21, 2018

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Photo: Sara D. Davis, Stringer / Getty Images

IMAGE 1 OF 3

Crowds gather during the Rally for Respect outside the North Carolina Legislative Building on May 16, 2018 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Several North Carolina counties closed schools to allow teachers to march ... [more](#)

The job of a teacher is not all that different than the job of a brain surgeon. Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath made this comparison at a recent meeting with the editorial board as a way of challenging us to think about the complexity of a teacher's job. When teachers assume control of their classrooms, they're not responsible for one brain but for 30. And by the way, their charges are awake and giving feedback throughout the day.

Yet, teachers don't get the respect they deserve.

The old saw — “Those who can, do; those who can't, teach” — is just plain wrong. Research shows that effective teachers produce as much as five times the learning gains as the least effective teachers. Our society is slow to applaud these excellent teachers' efforts and quick to blame educators for problems over which they can have no control such as student poverty.

The pay scale for teachers reflects this lack of respect as well. A starting teacher in the Houston area is going to earn in the high \$40,000s or the low \$50,000s his or her first year — which is a fine wage right out of undergraduate school. But teachers' salaries don't keep up as they rack up essential classroom experience.

Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Legislature need to step up next session and revamp our school finance system to ensure that teachers' compensation packages are competitive with employees in the private sector who have similar levels of education and time on task. They should make sure that teachers don't have to dig into their pockets to buy necessary classroom supplies such as paper, pens and wipes.

The Legislature also needs to do more to support teacher retention. Campus budgets should be sufficient to allow districts to create structured residency programs that pair new teachers with experienced mentors. When a newly certified educator enters a high expectations environment, the performance of the teacher rises very rapidly. Too often our new teachers are not prepared to take on our most challenging schools.

Morath described the job's daunting drawbacks. “You work 60 hours a week, and you come home crying about some story that you heard from your students, and you're spending your personal money on your kids. And you do that for 10 years, and now you're making \$3,000 more than that.”

Our teachers' current situation is untenable. Doing nothing is not an option if Texas is to attract and retain the excellent teachers that our children need to learn.

TRANSLATOR

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5/21/2018

Teachers and brain surgeons have a lot in common [Editorial] - Houston Chronicle

There is no more complicated task in which man is engaged than preparing youth to succeed in this complex world. Texas' political leadership needs to recognize that those who are brave enough to take on the hardest job in the world, teach.

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