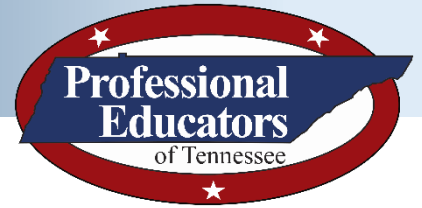


# EDITORIAL

February 14, 2025 Online at [www.proedtn.org](http://www.proedtn.org)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## We Still Need Teachers

Teaching is a challenging profession that requires specific skills, which not everyone has. The pandemic highlighted the difficulties in recruiting and retaining public school teachers.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 86% of K-12 public schools in the U.S. struggle to hire staff for the 2023-24 academic year, with 83% facing challenges recruiting non-teaching staff. Nearly 45% of public schools have teaching vacancies, averaging two per school, and 4% of nationwide teaching positions are unfilled.

The Tennessee Department of Education [reported](#) 1,434 vacant positions across school districts, averaging 10 per district, with a statewide vacancy rate of nearly 2%. For the 2023-24 school year, critical shortage areas include ESL at 2.87%, World Languages at 3.29%, Special Education at 3.56%, and Pre-K at 4.97%. Additionally, 7,441 positions are either vacant or filled by teachers with emergency credentials, representing 10.31% of teaching positions. Districts are using strategies such as endorsement exemptions and temporary permits to address these vacancies, with varying approaches across regions.

We commend Governor Lee for mentioning teacher shortages in his 2025 State of the State. It's crucial to focus on teacher licensing rather than general occupational licensure. The Praxis Exam, which aligns with national standards instead of Tennessee's, is a barrier for potential K-12 educators. We must remove obstacles that deter qualified candidates, as bureaucracy does not improve education services.

With fewer students entering education, there is a growing demand for qualified teachers. Enhancing training programs and providing incentives to attract and retain skilled educators is essential.

The teacher shortage, particularly in special education, math, and science, is expected to worsen with the rising school-age population. Colleges of Education must produce quality teachers for Career and Technical Education (CTE) fields and enhance paraprofessional skills.

We must provide clear information to those considering teaching. While challenging, it can be rewarding. Teaching allows educators to impact students' lives and offers a structured schedule. Collaboration with students, parents, and the community is vital for supporting educators and students.

Effective teachers inspire and build strong relationships with their students. However, they face numerous responsibilities beyond instruction, including grading and administrative tasks, often leading to extended hours.

### SUMMARY

*"Teaching is a critical profession that is often undervalued and poorly compensated. Educators face challenges such as classroom management and frequently take on additional jobs to stay financially afloat. Society needs to recognize and better support the teaching profession."*

Teaching is a critical profession that is often undervalued and poorly compensated. Educators face challenges such as classroom management and frequently take on additional jobs to stay financially afloat. Society needs to recognize and better support the teaching profession.

The education landscape is changing, and increasing teachers' workloads contributes to stress. The practice of linking performance to student outcomes through high-stakes testing should be re-evaluated. Despite these challenges, passionate individuals should consider pursuing a career in education.

Recruiting teachers is an urgent issue that must be prioritized. Acknowledging the situation's seriousness and collaborating on solutions is essential; schools may soon need to post help-wanted signs.

Public education is not “broken,” but flawed policies negatively impact schools. Longstanding societal issues remain unaddressed, burdening public education. The teacher shortage is a pressing reality we must address.

We must continue to value and support our teachers. Their role is crucial in shaping the future, and now more than ever, we need dedicated individuals to inspire and educate the next generation. Let's recognize and invest in the teaching profession!

#####

**JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee**, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact [info@proedtn.org](mailto:info@proedtn.org) or 1-800-471-4867.