



Building an Equitable School System for All Students and Educators

Section 1

*Educator Compensation
and Work Environments*



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The Educator Compensation and Work Environments Team

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Introduction

Researchers have documented the “professional wage gap” facing public educators. Average educator compensation sits well below the average compensation of other professional careers. All educators in Minnesota, teachers and education support professionals (ESPs), receive less compensation than they deserve. In many ways, it is more accurate to use the term “teacher pay penalty” or “ESP pay penalty” when discussing educator compensation. The educators of Minnesota deserve equitable compensation as compared to other professional careers.

“I have the same conversation every year with my student teachers. I ask about their future plans and where they want to work. And they say, they are going to China to teach English because they will be paid more. They plan to teach in China and save money and return to the United States if things change.”

In a previous Educator Policy Innovation Center (EPIC), we reported the observations from Esther Hammerschmidt, a veteran Spanish teacher at Redwood Valley High School in southwest Minnesota. We wrote:

[Esther Hammerschmidt] has stories from the field about many teaching candidates completing their training in Minnesota and then leaving for more lucrative international positions. Hammerschmidt stated, “I have the same conversation every year with my student teachers. I ask about their future plans and where they want to work. And they say, they are going to China to teach English because they will be paid more. They plan to teach in China and save money and return to the United States if things change” (personal communication, January 15, 2016). This means teachers like Hammerschmidt provide teaching candidates with ample training and mentoring to set them up for success in their future classroom. Then, those candidates decide to leave the state and country because they cannot afford to accept the salaries Minnesota schools offer. This story should be even more alarming to policymakers because Hammerschmidt trains candidates in a specialty field that districts struggle to fill. Minnesota has to increase teacher compensation, so the state does not continue to lose homegrown candidates to other states and countries. (Educator Policy Innovation Center, January 2016, p. 39)

Equitable compensation is a depressingly complicated topic for educators and education policymakers. Scholars have confirmed that most educators enter the profession for altruistic reason, and it is hard to find an educator who chose education for the compensation package. However, government leaders and school boards have preyed on the altruism of public educators by cutting salaries, slashing benefits, and creating financial problems that complicate the personal lives of our dedicated public educators.

Minnesota needs to become an example of how to better compensate educators. Lawmakers in this state should not be proud of the fact that Minnesota consistently ranks in the middle in national comparisons of educator compensation by state. In addition, Minnesota's policymakers should be appalled that the state's middle-of-the-road ranking is merely a state average. Many districts are well below the state average further complicating the financial lives of educators in those places. Finally, Minnesota's middle-of-the-road educator wages, as compared to other states, are still well below the wages and compensation other college-educated professionals receive for their labor.

Labor scholars use the term compensation as an umbrella term for the pay and benefits, current and deferred, an employee receives for performed labor. In an ideal world, all workers would earn an equitable and appropriate compensation package for the work they perform for organizations and governments. In reality, very few U.S. workers receive family-supporting wages and compensation, or equitable pay and benefits, to sustain their life and the lives of their dependents.

We need to offer a few caveats before we present our findings and recommendations on educator compensation. First, this section covers the compensation of licensed educators (teachers) and non-licensed professionals (ESPs). We use the term "educator" to refer to both ESPs and teachers. However, most teachers and ESPs have different collective bargaining agreements.¹ At times, we will need to write about just teacher compensation or just ESP compensation. We will indicate those moments for clarity.

Second, there are several organizations and researchers documenting statistics related to teachers. However, these same researchers rarely, if ever, provide data on ESPs. This is unfortunate and is an indication that the labor market continues to devalue the work of these important educators. In many places, we want to provide comparable numbers related to ESPs, but the information does not exist. We will point that out throughout this section.

Finally, we draw attention to the work of the National Council for Educational Support Professionals (NCESP), a division of the National Education Association. This group is working to change the lack of public awareness and consideration for the important work provided by ESPs. Lawmakers should remember these important realities:

- Education support professionals transport children from their homes to school and back.
- Education support professionals provide most of the direct services to students with disabilities.

¹ ESPs and teachers are on the same collective bargaining agreement in some districts, such as Minnesota District #287.

- Education support professionals prepare the cafeteria meals that nourish children.
- Education support professionals are the reason hallways are mopped, trash bins are emptied, schedules are printed, supplies are ordered, recess is kept safe, and buildings are repaired.
- Education support professionals serve as safety coaches and replacements for school resource officers.
- Education support professionals act as job coaches for students enrolled in pathway programs.
- Education support professionals assist administrators with scheduling, family communication, and office management.

Image 1.1, from the NCESP, highlights the several roles ESPs play in schools. Minnesota schools trust ESPs with students several hours each day, so Minnesota should equitably compensate these vital employees.

IMAGE 1.1: ROLES AND DUTIES OF EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

<i>JOB CATEGORY</i>	<i>FUNCTION</i>
Custodial and maintenance services	Building and grounds maintenance and repair
Security services	School resource, guard, campus monitors, police and security specialists
Food services	Food planning, preparation and service
Health and student services	Nursing, therapy and health support, community and welfare services
Para-educators	Instructional and non-instructional support
Clerical services	Secretarial, clerical and administrative support
Skilled trades services	Trades, crafts and machine operators
Transportation services	Transportation, delivery and vehicle maintenance services
Technical services	Computer, audiovisual and language technical support and media, public relations, writing and art specialties
Higher education	All higher education ESPs performing in the job categories listed above

We reproduced this image from Education Support Professionals: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student. Education Minnesota is a state affiliate of the National Education Association. (National Education Association, March 2015, p. 20).

Scholars have consistently proven that there is a “professional pay gap” for teachers (some scholars refer to this phenomenon as a “teacher pay penalty”). ESPs also face a pay penalty, but researchers have not documented the differential with consistent tracking. Educators earn less than their similarly educated peers, and educator wages have tracked downward since the 1970s. Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2017) have confirmed that

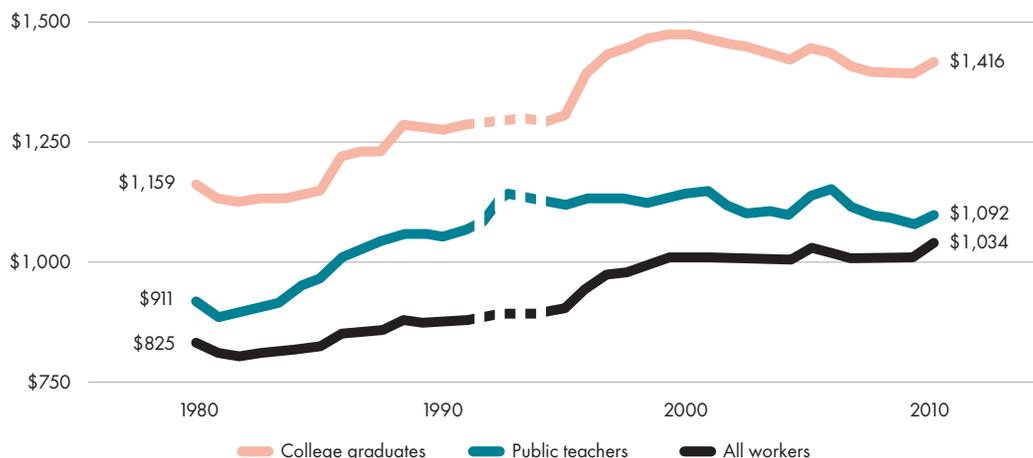
even after adjusting for the shorter work year in teaching, beginning teachers nationally earn about 20% less than individuals with college degrees in other fields, a wage gap that can widen to 30% by midcareer (Baker, Sciarra, & Farrie, 2015). Moreover, the difference between teacher compensation and that of other workers with a college degree has grown larger over time. (p. 22)

Nationally, scholars know teachers earn \$324 less per week than other college graduates do. This amounts to a loss of \$16,848 dollars annually, on average, for the trained professionals trusted to teach the children of this nation.

The professional wage gap for educators exists at all experience levels and throughout the entire career of a teacher. Graph 1.1 compares the average weekly wages of teachers to those of other college graduates. Nationally, scholars know teachers earn \$324 less per week than other college graduates do. This amounts to a loss of \$16,848 dollars annually, on average, for the trained professionals trusted to teach the children of this nation.

GRAPH 1.1: TEACHERS WEEKLY WAGES COMPARED TO OTHER COLLEGE GRADUATES

Teachers' weekly wages are 23% lower than those of other college graduates. Average weekly wages of public school teachers, other college graduates, and all workers, 1979–2015 (2015 dollars)



Note: "College graduates" excludes public school teachers, and "all workers" includes everyone (including public school teachers and college graduates). Wages are adjusted to 2015 dollars using the CPI-U-RS. Data are for workers age 18–64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Non-imputed data are not available for 1994 and 1995; data points for these years have been extrapolated and are represented by dotted lines (see Appendix A for more detail). Source: Authors' analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data. Economic Policy Institute. Graph 1.1 reproduced with permission from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Gap is Wider Than Ever*, Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Wage & Employment Dynamics at the University of California, Berkeley, August 2016. (p. 7).

The deregulation and market-based trends that have damaged public education have also led to wage and benefit cuts for educators.

Teachers did not always face such a steep wage penalty. In fact, teachers in the 1960s earned wages comparable to other careers requiring college education. However, the deregulation and market-based trends that have damaged public education have also led to wage and benefit cuts for educators. In addition, advocates for teachers face an uphill battle when trying to alter these patterns because of the many false narratives that cloud the reality facing public educators.²

In the following pages, we correct public misunderstandings about educator labor and offer solutions to replace the policies that have stalled and deflated educator compensation for decades.

2 See the National Education Association's document titled (*Teacher compensation: Fact versus Fiction.*)

Public educators are outpacing all other professions in terms of illness and desires to change careers because of stress. Compensation includes comprehensive insurance, a reliable pension, and an equitable, family-supporting wage. All educators, and all workers in the United States, should feel valued, respected, and supported in their day-to-day job responsibilities.

Educators enter the profession for altruistic reasons, not for high salaries. However, they still deserve equitable pay and benefits.³ Minnesota cannot continue paying educators at abysmal levels. In addition, there are other portions of compensation and work life, beyond pay and benefits, which require the attention of policymakers. Public educators are outpacing all other professions in terms of illness and desires to change careers because of stress. Compensation includes comprehensive insurance, a reliable pension, and an equitable, family-supporting wage. All educators, and all workers in the United States, should feel valued, respected, and supported in their day-to-day job responsibilities.

If Minnesota’s lawmakers are serious about improving education, closing opportunity gaps, and preparing every child to succeed in a 21st century economy, then it is time to recognize, and act on, what it takes to do so.

Minnesota needs to provide educators with higher wages and better benefits. The state also needs to implement policies and provide resources that will decrease work stressors that are leading to physical and mental illness among educators. Providing a modest level of student loan debt relief, raising ESP wages to \$15 per hour, and ensuring that every licensed teacher started their career at \$50,000 annually would require an over \$1 billion investment in education. However, there is a direct correlation between the quality of professionals working with students and student success. If Minnesota’s lawmakers are serious about improving education, closing opportunity gaps, and preparing every child to succeed in a 21st century economy, then it is time to recognize, and act on, what it takes to do so.

³ *Educators continue to leave the profession in part because current compensation levels do not provide for the high costs associated with becoming an educator. Educator compensation is also inadequate as a counter-weight to the working conditions many educators face.*

We make this case by focusing on these questions:

1. How large is the professional wage gap for educators? What does the wage gap look like for different categories of educators?
2. What work stressors do public educators face? How are these stressors affecting the health and lives of public educators?
3. How can Minnesota improve working conditions and compensation for public educators?

Minnesota lawmakers must act now to prevent educator attrition from growing. In the following pages, we build a case for this action by covering the following topics:

- The cost of living for Minnesota educators.
- Oppositional voices about educator compensation.
- The educator wage gap: national and Minnesota specific trends.
- The sexist dimension of the educator wage gap.
- Education support professionals and the right to a living wage.
- The connection between educator benefits and the educator wage gap.
- The student loan debt loads burdening Minnesota's educators.

We then identify the work stressors facing educators by discussing the facts that:

- Educators lack basic resources for their classrooms.
- Educators work multiple jobs to earn equitable wages.
- Educators are struggling with their mental health.
- Educators of color face tremendous institutional stressors driven by systemic racism.

We conclude the section by offering a list of potential solutions policymakers should consider.

Cost of Living for Minnesota Educators

In the remainder of this section, we will be discussing both educator compensation and the financial strains educators face to meet their basic needs. Thus, we felt it was necessary to begin this section with a discussion of the basic family expenses Minnesotans face.

We calculated these numbers using the EPI's Family Budget Calculator. EPI describes this calculator as a tool that

measures the income a family needs in order to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living. The budgets estimate community-specific costs for 10 family types (one or two adults with zero to four children) in all counties and metro areas in the United States. Compared with the federal poverty line and the Supplemental Poverty Measure, EPI's family budgets provide a more accurate and complete measure of economic security in America. (Economic Policy Institute)

Image 1.2 and Image 1.3 are annual costs for a family of two adults and two children in either rural Minnesota or urban Minnesota. We ask policymakers to consider these total annual costs as we discuss the problematically low wages Minnesota's educators earn.

IMAGE 1.2: ANNUAL COST OF LIVING, URBAN MINNESOTA

ANNUAL COSTS 2 ADULTS AND 2 CHILDREN HENNEPIN COUNTY, MN	
Housing	\$13,230
Food	\$9,836
Child care	\$22,295
Transportation	\$13,633
Health care	\$14,982
Other necessities	\$9,305
Taxes	\$15,201
Annual total	\$98,483

IMAGE 1.3: ANNUAL COST OF LIVING, RURAL MINNESOTA

ANNUAL COSTS 2 ADULTS AND 2 CHILDREN PINE COUNTY, MN	
Housing	\$9,624
Food	\$8,955
Child care	\$11,502
Transportation	\$15,502
Health care	\$16,796
Other necessities	\$7,495
Taxes	\$10,887
Annual total	\$80,762

We reproduced Image 1.1 and Image 1.2 with permission from the Economic Policy Institute. We generated the images using EPI's Family Budget Calculator found at: Economic Policy Institute, Family Budget Calculator, <https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>. We have also reproduced EPI's explanation of how researchers define and calculate each category. Housing,⁴ food,⁵ child care,⁶ transportation,⁷ health care,⁸ other necessities,⁹ and taxes.¹⁰

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- 4 *Housing: Housing costs are based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's fair market rents, which represent rental costs (shelter rent plus utilities) at the 40th percentile in a given area for privately owned, structurally safe, and sanitary rental housing of a modest nature with suitable amenities. Studio apartments were used for one-adult families, one-bedroom apartments for two-adult families, two-bedroom apartments for families with one or two children, and three-bedroom apartments for families with three or four children.*
 - 5 *Food: Food costs are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's national "low-cost" food plan and adjusted to each area using multipliers from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap data. The low-cost plan is the second-least-expensive of the four Official USDA Food Plans and assumes almost all food is bought at the grocery store and then prepared at home. The USDA food plans represent the amount families need to spend to achieve nutritionally adequate diets.*
 - 6 *Child care: Child care expenses are based on costs of center-based child care and family-based care for 4-year-olds and school-age children, as reported by the Child Care Aware of America. We assume all families in urban areas use center-based care and all families in rural areas use family-based care. For one-child families, we assume the child is 4 years old. For families with more than one child, we assume the additional children are ages 8, 12, and 16, respectively.*
 - 7 *Transportation: Transportation expenses are a combination of the costs of auto ownership, auto use, and transit use. Transportation cost data were provided by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT). CNT created a modified version of transportation costs from its Housing and Transportation Affordability Index to account for differences in family types in the Family Budget Calculator.*
 - 8 *Health care: Health care expenses include insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs, and assume families purchase the lowest cost bronze plans on the health insurance exchange established under the Affordable Care Act. Data on premiums come from the Kaiser Family Foundation and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Out-of-pocket medical costs are calculated from HHS's Medical Expenditure Panel Survey.*
 - 9 *Other necessities: Other necessities include apparel, personal care, household supplies (which include items ranging from furnishings to cleaning supplies to phone service), reading materials, and school supplies. The costs for these items come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey, and use data reported for households in the second (from the bottom) fifth of households in the household income distribution.*
 - 10 *Taxes: Taxes are calculated from the National Bureau of Economic Research's Internet TAXSIM, an online tool that calculates information on federal personal income taxes, state income taxes, and federal Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes.*

Oppositional Voices: Market-Based Positions on Educator Compensation

Most economic attacks on public education, from both the political left and the political right, are rooted in market-based theories. There are two inherent problems with these lines of critique. First, market-based theories about competition and productivity do not fit in an education model. Educators are not selling widgets in a global marketplace; educators are training the next generation of citizens who will spur industry and research. School choice and charter school models across the nation have provided a plethora of examples of how market-based models fail. Market-based approaches will not solve teacher compensation problems.

Becky Hespen, president of the Osseo Education Support Professionals Association, reports that many of her members struggle to meet the basic financial needs of their families. Some of her members arrive three hours early to school and sleep in their cars because they share one automobile with their spouse.

Second, the same theorists who embrace market-based reforms fail to recognize that ESPs are walking off the job to earn higher wages at local restaurants, bars, and places of retail. Becky Hespen, president of the Osseo Education Support Professionals Association, reports that many of her members struggle to meet the basic financial needs of their families. Some of her members arrive three hours early to school and sleep in their cars because they share one automobile with their spouse. ESPs work with the most vulnerable students and provide vital services to Minnesota's students. They deserve wages that are comparable, and higher, than those they can earn in retail or food service.

In what follows, we debunk the misconceptions promoted by education reformers touting market-based economic fixes for public education. In this section, we are speaking solely to teacher wages because, as noted above, education reformers tend to usually only focus on teachers. We limit our critique to the work of Michael Podgursky, professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia, because he is one of the most prolific and outspoken scholars pushing false narratives about educator pay and his arguments are a good example of most market-based, education reform theories cited in policy debates.

Podgursky, and scholars like him, promote their agendas with two contradictory arguments. These scholars first decry the current education system for “not being market based” and impossible for comparison. Then they offer a critique of the system in which they offer market-based comparisons. In his study for the George W. Bush initiative, Podgursky (2014) argued, “if a rational system of teacher compensation, aimed at recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, were designed from scratch, it is unlikely it would bear any resemblance to the system currently in place” (Podgursky, February 2014). Then, Podgursky used this essay, and other works, to do exactly what he says is a “fraught process” by offering market-based comparisons to support his faulty claims. Podgursky (2014) has:

1. posited, with faulty figures, that “generous” retirement benefits and other non-wage compensation has resulted in teachers enjoying “a total level of salary and benefits significantly above comparably educated private-sector employees.” (p. 2)
2. offered a problematic argument that the expertise of some educators work is “more beneficial” and makes them more attractive to other professions. In his worldview, these educators could command higher pay in other careers. (p. 4)

Podgursky (2014) also had the audacity to write, “A second grade teacher will earn the same pay as a high school chemistry teacher. Given the major differences in human capital investments by teaching field (e.g. elementary education versus secondary physical science) it is almost certainly the case that non-teaching opportunity earnings differ greatly as well” (Podgursky, February 2014, p. 5). To be clear, Podgursky has argued (1) teacher compensation is adequate and (2) some teachers are simply worth more than others.

Second, Podgursky and scholars like him, denounce single-pay schedules while ignoring the history behind these equalizing structures. To his credit, Podgursky (2014) did account for the history of these pay schedules by writing, “since elementary school teachers were nearly all women whereas high school teachers were largely male, early struggles for a single salary schedule were seen by some commentators as an important part of feminist struggles for pay equity” (Podgursky, February 2014, p. 4). This is correct. Educators, unions, and districts embraced single-salary schedules to recognize the service and experience of all teachers and to attempt to correct for race-based and gender-based inequities in compensation created by market-based compensation systems. So, why would lawmakers want to eliminate single pay schedule systems? We think it is better to make the steps and lanes of these systems more equitable rather than throwing them out the window all together.

Podgursky and others have built a strawhouse of bad arguments about teacher compensation, and it does not take a lot of analysis to provide the evidence to watch their house crumble. These scholars want to dismantle and replace, rather than improve, a corrective system. They also do not provide rational for how the “free market” will ensure equitable compensation for teachers. The U.S. Department of Labor annually confirms that professional pay schedules and compensation, the market-based wage systems Podgursky loves, have not helped close corporate gender pay gaps. Thus, we ask:

How will eliminating single-salary schedules protect educators from experiencing similar discrimination?

In addition, Podgursky and market-based scholars fail to mention that most teacher contracts across the nation allow teachers to earn additional wages by completing professional development, illustrating student growth, and earning higher degrees. They also often ignore the fact that many teachers start at higher places on the salary schedule because of their expertise, which is a practice most union leaders endorse.

We think all students need quality art teachers, language teachers, science teachers, and civics teachers. It is a dangerous practice to place more value in one set of academic expertise over another.

Finally, we call the question Podgursky-like scholars never ask. Who makes the compensation calls in their new market-based world? Do individual administrators get to decide the relative worth of each teacher? Are these scholars at peace with an art teacher making \$20,000 more than a biology teacher in one district while the reverse is true in the district next door? Educators introduce students to a wide range of perspectives and ideas. We think all students need quality art teachers, language teachers, science teachers, and civics teachers. It is a dangerous practice to place more value in one set of academic expertise over another.

Yes, expertise and training should be valued. However, we believe this means all types of expertise and training. It is regressive, and illogical, to dismantle a system that attempts to promote equal pay for equal work and equal training. The high school chemistry teacher will not be able to do his or her job without the foundation laid by the second-grade teachers in his or her district. Educators deserve fair and equitable compensation for the work they perform in schools, across all grade levels. Podgursky, and scholars like him, seem to be mainly interested in raising the wages of some teachers while suppressing the earnings of others, and we have more than enough examples to show those sorts of changes disproportionately harm women and people of color.

The Educator Wage Gap: National and Minnesota Specific Trends

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) has been the leading organization tracking the educator wage gap across decades. Allegretto and Mishel (2016), writing for the EPI, documented that

For over a decade, starting with *How Does Teacher Pay Compare?* (Allegretto, Corcoran, & Mishel, 2004), we have studied the long-term trends in teacher pay. We followed this up with *The Teaching Penalty*, published in 2008 using 2006 data, and have updated our findings occasionally in other papers. Our body of work has documented the relative erosion of teacher pay. (p. 3)

“Average weekly wages (inflation adjusted) of public-sector teachers decreased \$30 per week from 1996 to 2015, from \$1,122 to \$1,092 (in 2015 dollars). In contrast, weekly wages of all college graduates rose from \$1,292 to \$1,416 over this period.”

In 2016, The EPI published “The teacher pay gap is wider than ever: Teacher’s pay continues to fall further behind pay of comparable workers,” to further illustrate this growing problem. Allegretto and Mishel (2016), the authors of the report, concluded that “average weekly wages (inflation adjusted) of public-sector teachers decreased \$30 per week from 1996 to 2015, from \$1,122 to \$1,092 (in 2015 dollars). In contrast, weekly wages of all college graduates rose from \$1,292 to \$1,416 over this period” (p. 4). Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2017) later promoted the work of the EPI adding legitimacy to the claim that nationally “teachers earned less than 11% in total compensation” than workers in other fields requiring college education (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, May 2017, pp. 22-23).

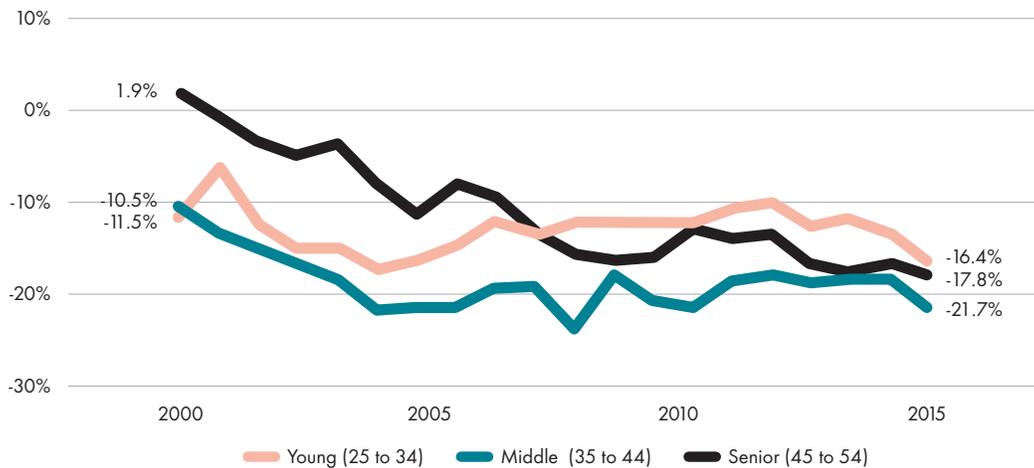
The numbers become starker when disaggregated by different categories of educators. The pay gap grew higher, not lower, for educators with a master's degree (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, May 2017, p. 23). Graph 1.2 shows that experience and advanced degrees did not help individual educators close the professional pay gap. Unfortunately, those educators just saw the gap continue to increase, and they likely did so while accumulating large amounts of student loan debt. Allegreto and Mishel (2016) also determined:

- For all public-sector teachers, the relative wage gap (regression adjusted for education, experience, and other factors) has grown substantially since the mid-1990s: It was -1.8% in 1994 and grew to a record -17.0% in 2015.
- The teacher compensation penalty grew by 11 percentage points from 1994 to 2015.
- The erosion of relative teacher wages has fallen more heavily on experienced teachers than on entry-level teachers. The relative wage of the most experienced teachers has steadily deteriorated—from a 1.9% advantage in 1996 to a 17.8% penalty in 2015. (p. 4)

Scholars like Podgursky say these numbers are inflated because teachers (1) work nine months a year and (2) earn attractive non-wage benefits such as pensions. Allegreto and Mishel (2016) accounted for these benefits and determined Podgursky-like scholars are wrong on this point. The total teacher compensation penalty was a record-high 11.1% in 2015 (composed of a 17.0% wage penalty plus a 5.9% benefit advantage). The bottom line is that the teacher compensation penalty grew by 11 percentage points from 1994 to 2015 (p. 4). Non-wage benefits, like health insurance and pensions, vary widely by district. However, even the best non-wage, compensation packages fails to fill the void of the professional wage gap.

GRAPH 1.2: TEACHER WAGES COMPARED TO OTHER COLLEGE GRADUATES BY AGE/EXPERIENCE

The teacher wage gap grew more for experienced teachers. Wage gap between public school teachers and similar workers, by age cohort, 1996–2015



*Note: Figure compares weekly wages. Regression-adjusted estimates include controls for age (quartic), education, race/ethnicity, geographical region, marital status, and gender for the pooled sample. Data are for workers age 18–64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Source: Authors’ analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data. Economic Policy Institute. Graph 1.2 reproduced with permission from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Gap is Wider Than Ever*, Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Wage & Employment Dynamics at the University of California, Berkeley, August 2016 (p. 10).*

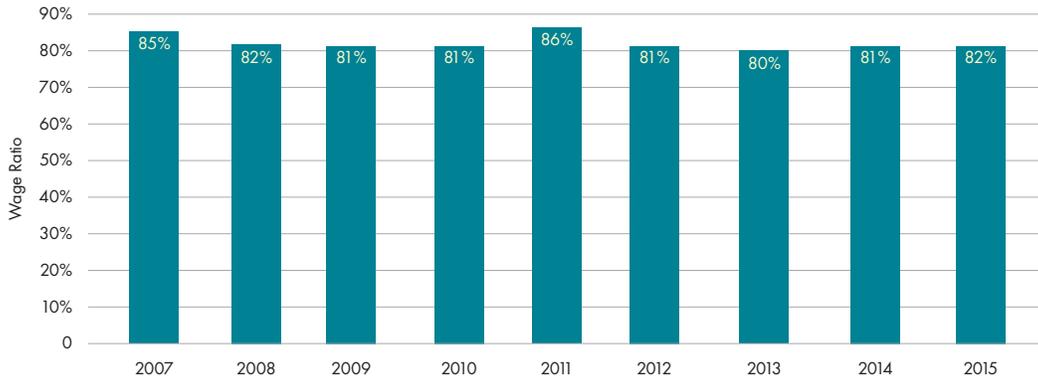
The location of a district also adds to the wage gap for some educators. Educators in rural areas face tremendous professional wage gaps because their districts cannot compete with the salaries offered in areas that are more affluent. Scholars have shown:

Rural districts have difficulties finding qualified experienced educators...Competitive salaries and the lack of local amenities are often determining factors in successfully recruiting qualified candidates (Timar & Carter, 2016). Rural school systems often lack the financial capacity to compete with larger urban and suburban areas (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008; Timar & Carter, 2017). (Johnson, Ohlson, & Shope, 2018, p. 142)

In addition, Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2017) have also confirmed that “great inequities in teacher salaries among districts within the same labor market leave some high-need, under-resourced districts at a strong hiring disadvantage. For example, an analysis found that the best-paid teachers in low-poverty schools earned 35% more than their counterparts in high-poverty schools” did (p. 23). The educator wage gap will look very different depending on where an educator works.

As we noted earlier, Minnesota ranks in the middle for educator compensation. All states are underachieving, and Minnesota is squeaking by with a middle-of-the-road average. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (2018) documented that the average educator in Minnesota earns \$57,782, which places the state as having the 21st highest average teacher salary (A decade of neglect: Public education funding in the aftermath of the great recession). In addition, the Education Law Center at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education is one of the few research organizations that disaggregates the pay gap by state. Graph 1.3 reports the most recent data about Minnesota and shows “the average 25-year-old teacher [in Minnesota] makes 82% of the salary of a non-teacher in the same labor market who is of similar education, hours worked and age” (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2018).¹¹ Unfortunately, this early career, base salary difference will only grow and continue to work against young educators throughout their careers.

GRAPH 1.3: MINNESOTA EARLY CAREER TEACHER SALARY COMPARED TO OTHER PROFESSIONS



We reproduced Graph 1.3 with permission from researchers at the Education Law Center. The original authors retain copyright permission to this image. The original image appears in: Baker, Bruce D., Danielle Farrie, & David Sciarra, 2018. "Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card", 7th Edition. www.schoolfundingfairness.org.

Minnesota’s policymakers must close this growing professional wage gap in order to make any progress in stopping educator attrition. It is time to pay educators what they are worth. Minnesota can do better than 21st out of 51.

¹¹ The numbers for Graph 1.3 and this claim are associated with the interactive infographics at www.schoolfundingfairness.org. These numbers are associated and tied to the same work and project as the report authored by Baker, Farrie, and Sciarra (2018).

The Professional Wage Gap Disproportionately Harms Female Educators

The Economic Policy Institute and other organizations have confirmed that female workers face a wage gap when compared to their male peers. There are many systemic reasons for this wage gap. However, Davis and Gould (November 2015) have argued:

Wage gaps are caused by several factors, but researchers have found that up to 41.1 percent of the overall pay gap between men and women is left unexplained after controlling for various factors such as industry, experience, and education...This likely means that factors such as discrimination are perpetuating wage gaps. (p. 7)

We hypothesize that women experience greater ramifications from a lack of paid family leave than men, and we will address this in a later section on the need for paid family leave for all educators. However, we open with the argument of Davis and Gould as a nice frame for a direct discussion about how wage gaps are real and salary schedules can help correct for many systemic biases that may perpetuate these pay differentials.

Wage gaps are real and salary schedules can help correct for many systemic biases that may perpetuate these pay differentials.

Female educators face an even larger pay gap than their male colleagues. Allegretto and Mishel (2016) documented that “in 1960, female teachers enjoyed a wage premium compared with other college graduates” (p. 3). Allegretto and Tojerow (2014) also argued:

The relative wage gap for female teachers went from a premium in 1960 to a large and growing wage penalty in the 2000s. Female teachers earned 14.7 percent more in weekly wages than comparable female workers in 1960. (p. 4)

This was not always the case for women educators. Brown and Stern (2018) used the work of Dana Goldstein “to deconstruct how, in the United States, teaching as women’s work became historically and ideologically naturalized” and this in turn may have led to the devaluing of the labor (p. 179). We agree with two positions from other scholars who have accounted for the gender pay gap in education. Female educators face sexist compensation packages due to (1) market-based reforms and (2) a lack of respect for the education field from policymakers.

First, the gender pay gap is a product of the problematic market-based reforms that have created more inequity in public education. Proponents of market-based efforts to reform public schools tout the potential autonomy these efforts will bring for educators, administrators, and parents. However, the current incarnations of market-based reform have not delivered on these promises. Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, and Germain (2018) have rightly claimed, “market-based reforms are not gender neutral in their impacts” (p. 782). They also noted that

many of these market-driven policies aim, rightly, to give school leaders and educators on the ground more autonomy and discretion; however, in some areas, such as compensation and hiring, this discretion may allow for individual bias to play a greater role. Indeed, research has shown the role of institutional policies as a mechanism for discrimination. (p. 782)

Market-based reforms open all aspects of public schools, educator compensation included, to all sorts of individual biases. Jabbar et. al (2018) have confirmed “there is reason to believe that more discrimination in wages appears when wages become less fixed by salary schedule” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 773). It is fair to argue, “Teacher labor-market deregulation and school choice may have disparate impacts on women, who comprise the vast majority of teachers” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 756).

“Teacher labor-market deregulation and school choice may have disparate impacts on women, who comprise the vast majority of teachers” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 756).

Second, the gender pay gap derived from the public and political devaluing of “care work.” Modern compensation practices reward outputs that build capital or produce measurable results. Education is a profession driven by “emotional labor” which is “is often invisible” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 764). Jabbar et al. (2018) have shown that education labor

has inputs and outputs that are harder to measure. For example, in education, standardized tests are commonly used to measure academic performance, but do not measure other outcomes, such as emotional skills or becoming lifelong learners, even though parents may value the care work and emotional labor conducted by teachers... this difficulty in measuring inputs and outputs may contribute to the relatively low pay for care workers. (p. 763)

In addition, workers in professions devoted to the care of others are less likely to advocate for higher wages because of what scholars have called their “psychic income.” They are “emotionally committed to the work” and they greatly value “the intrinsic rewards or satisfaction from such work” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 763). Sexist cultural notions can lead to this falling more on women and some employers may even expect female workers to “be more caring and supportive (e.g., listening to others’ problems) than men even when they are in equivalent jobs” (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 764).

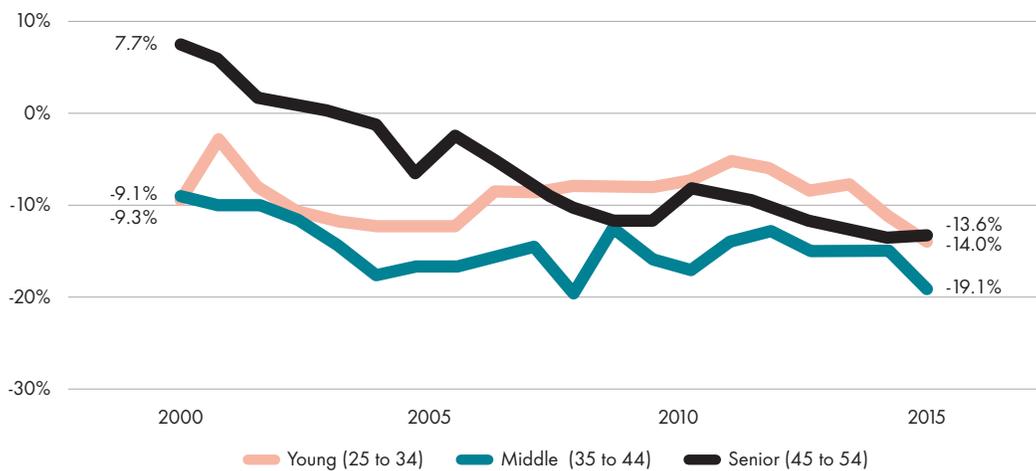
Educators perform immeasurable labor that reaps innumerable rewards for society. It is time Minnesota compensate the vital emotional labor educators perform every day.

**The gender pay gap must be part of the conversation
about educator compensation reform.**

The gender pay gap must be part of the conversation about educator compensation reform. Graph 1.4 documents the national teacher pay penalty facing women educators. Minnesota can do better and offer all educators equal pay for equal work.

GRAPH 1.4: TEACHER PAY PENALTY BY SEX

Regardless of experience, the teacher wage gap expanded for female teachers. Wage gap between female public school teachers and similar female workers, by age cohort, 1996–2015



*Note: Figure compares weekly wages. Regression-adjusted estimates include controls for age (quartic), education, race/ethnicity, geographical region, marital status, and gender for the pooled sample. Data are for workers age 18-64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Source: Authors’ analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data. Economic Policy Institute. Graph 1.4 reproduced with permission from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Gap is Wider Than Ever*, Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Wage & Employment Dynamics at the University of California, Berkeley, August 2016 (p. 11).*

Education Support Professionals Do Not Earn a Living Wage

Minnesota's education support professionals (ESPs) provide vital services to their school communities. Unfortunately, they earn less than workers in professions in food service and retail. Images 1.2 and 1.3 in this document displayed how much it costs to provide for a family in Minnesota. For this reason, all educators in the state of Minnesota should earn a family supporting wage. In addition, no ESP should earn a wage less than \$15 an hour.

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In special education settings, ESPs are often the professional staff providing most of the direct support for students. Unfortunately, many ESPs work for minimum wages. Many schools experience high ESP attrition because they can make better wages at fast food establishments in their community. The AFT (2018) confirmed, "It is not unusual for wages to be below what is needed to pay for a basic family budget" (p. 4). Currently, some Minnesota ESPs clear less than \$1 per paycheck after districts deduct the premiums for health insurance. When schools close unexpectedly for weather, sometimes those same employees can end up owing the district for the cost of their health insurance premiums, because their take-home pay does not rise to the amount required for the employee portion of those premiums.

Every ESP and para in the state of Minnesota deserves a living wage, which is "the amount it takes to live in the communities where they work" (Rosser, 2015, p. 93). Policymakers must appropriately compensate ALL educators if they hope to build equitable schools.

We find it unacceptable that ESPs and paras receive incredibly low wages for their work. We point Minnesota’s policymakers to the appalling findings from a 2003 and a 2018 report on ESP/para salaries. In these reports, the AFT (2018) documented that “teacher’s assistant salaries were consistently below what was needed to provide for a basic family budget for one parent and one child” and that “in no state does a teacher’s assistant making the average salary earn enough to provide for the basics for him- or herself and one child” (p. 4). Every ESP and para in the state of Minnesota deserves a living wage, which is “the amount it takes to live in the communities where they work” (Rosser, 2015, p. 93). Policymakers must appropriately compensate ALL educators if they hope to build equitable schools.

Inadequate Educator Benefits Further Contribute to the Professional Wage Gap

Health insurance premiums are an important piece of the financial life of all educators. According to the 2017 annual survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust, the “average annual premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance were \$6,690 for single coverage and \$18,764 for family coverage” (Claxton, 2017, p. 4). Minnesota’s educators have had to bear the rising costs of health insurance while their wages have failed to keep up. The dollar amounts cited in the Kaiser and HRET survey are averages; health insurance premiums are much higher in many of Minnesota’s districts. In some, they are so high that some educators forego employer health insurance or any health insurance at all in order to keep their jobs.

Minnesota’s educators have had to bear the rising costs of health insurance while their wages have failed to keep up.

ESPs face an even more difficult benefit gap in certain parts of the state. In some places, ESPs work solely for health insurance benefits. Some of these educators take home paychecks for a single dollar because all of their wages cover health insurance premiums. The winter of 2018-2019 has also produced a new financial burden for some ESPs. Minnesota districts have cancelled several days of school because of crippling winter weather. Most ESPs have to use personal or sick days to receive any wages on these days. However, some ESPs have exhausted their allotted personal days and now owe their employing district money to cover their missed wages that would have covered their health insurance premiums. These educators are literally paying to work.

According to the collective bargaining agreements in place, in 18 of Minnesota's school districts, the employee cost for family coverage is between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per month. The employee cost for family coverage is between \$1,000 and \$1,499 per month in 101 districts, and the employee costs for family coverage is between \$500 and \$1,000 per month in 195 districts. Educators cannot afford these costs on the salaries they are provided by their Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

Student Loan Debt Further Strains Educators

Minnesota's educators are also balancing low wages with "substantial debt incurred through education loans" (Rude & Miller, 2018, p. 27). This is very daunting for educators who are "starting a career with significant educational loan debt and an initial salary that is well below what other professionals will be earning through an entry-level position" (Rude & Miller, 2018, p. 27). In addition, the systems for obtaining, repaying, and forgiving student loans are incredibly complicated. Friedman (2018) has described the educator student loan options as

A patchwork of overlapping programs, contradictory regulations, and expensive subsidies that date back to...the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This 60-year experiment in using federal loan dollars to encourage students to become teachers could be poised for change as Congress considers reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

Minnesota's educators carry large debts that they may never be able to repay.

Friedman (2018) also confirmed, "Among undergraduate education majors, some 67 percent borrowed federal student loans—5 percentage points more than the overall population of bachelor's degree recipients." Both the federal and state government continue to scale back loan forgiveness options while the cost of higher education rises. This means Minnesota's educators carry large debts that they may never be able to repay.

Minnesota lawmakers should be particularly aware of the following points:

1. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education regularly calculates the median student loan debt for Minnesota graduates. Chart 1.1 presents a summary of some of the data from the agency's most recent policy brief on the topic. In the brief, Williams-Wyche (2017) also reported these figures:
 - a. The median cumulative debt for bachelor's degree recipients in Minnesota as of 2016 was \$25,969.
 - b. In 2016, 69% of all Minnesota undergraduates borrowed some money for higher education.
 - c. The majority of Minnesota students are borrowing regardless of the type of institution they attend. Students in the Minnesota State system borrow the most. They even borrow more money than students at private institutions do.
2. Friedman (2018) confirmed that Minnesota residents have some of the highest student loan debt totals in the nation. Chart 1.2 presents information on per-student debt totals by state. Friedman (2018) calculated Minnesota to be the state with the fifth highest in per-student debt totals.
3. Delisle (2014) also calculated the combined, average loan debt for students with both a bachelor's and an advanced degree. Chart 1.3 shows that education graduate students accounted for 16% of all students graduating with an advanced degree in 2012, and they carried an average of almost \$51,000 in combined loan debt. However, they will not command the salaries of their peers with law or medical degrees and will struggle to repay these loans. In addition, Chart 1.4 shows that education graduates saw the average monthly payment for their loans rise \$259 between 2004 and 2012. Unfortunately, they did not witness the same rise in their monthly salaries, as we have documented in other sections of this report.

CHART 1.1: CUMULATIVE MEDIAN DEBT FOR MINNESOTA'S BACHELOR'S DEGREE RECIPIENTS, 2014-2016

	TOTAL RECIPIENTS	TOTAL RECIPIENTS WITH LOANS	CUMULATIVE MEDIAN STUDENT LOAN DEBT	PERCENT OF RECIPIENTS WITH LOANS
MINNESOTA STATE				
2014	10,615	7,820	\$25,897	74%
2015	10,845	7,979	\$25,496	74%
2016	10,786	7,855	\$25,548	73%
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA				
2014	10,200	6,631	\$24,278	65%
2015	10,165	6,474	\$24,567	64%
2016	10,149	6,190	\$24,135	61%
PRIVATE NOT-FOR-PROFIT				
2014	11,006	8,052	\$27,635	73%
2015	10,986	7,968	\$28,391	73%
2016	10,896	7,821	\$26,921	72%

*Figures obtained from (Williams-Wyche, November 2017).

CHART 1.2: STATES WITH HIGHEST PER-STUDENT DEBT TOTALS

New Hampshire	\$36,367
Pennsylvania	\$35,759
Connecticut	\$35,494
Delaware	\$33,838
Minnesota	\$31,915

*figures obtained from (Friedman, 2018).

CHART 1.3: COMBINED UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE DEBT (CLASS OF 2012)

	TOTAL LOAN DEBT	SHARE OF GRADUATE DEGREES CONFERRED
Medicine and health sciences	\$ 161,772	5%
Law	\$ 140,616	4%
Master of arts	\$ 58,539	8%
Other master's degrees	\$ 55,489	15%
Master of education	\$ 50,879	16%
Master of science	\$ 50,400	18%
Master of business administration	\$ 42,000	11%

* Figures obtained from (Delisle J. , March 2014, p. 4).

CHART 1.4: CHANGES IN COMBINED LOAN DEBT FOR 2012 GRADUATES WITH MASTER OF EDUCATION

	CLASS OF 2004	CLASS OF 2012
Average total debt (undergraduate and graduate)	\$20,153	\$50,879
Typical monthly payment	\$170	\$429
Share of graduate degrees conferred	18%	16%

**Figures obtained from (Delisle J. , March 2014, p. 6).*

These figures should startle all Minnesota lawmakers, and they are proof that the state needs swift action to help relieve the education debt burdens of Minnesota educators.

ESP compensation must also include student loan debt relief.

We also know that many ESPs carry significant student loan burdens. Unfortunately, state and federal agencies do not track these figures as closely. ESP compensation must also include student loan debt relief.

Minnesota can and should do more to relieve the debt burdens facing educators.

Loan debt is a serious problem, and it can be a difficult topic to conceptualize. We offer Images 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 as examples of how loan debt causes financial difficulties for Minnesota educators. We based our examples on the average salary for all teachers and ESPs in the state as calculated by the Minnesota Department of Education. We took the other expense figures from the Economic Policy Institute’s Family Budget Calculator. In our fictional examples, all three educators make the average salary. In Image 1.4, our fictional teacher has \$32 dollars in monthly income after all other expenses are paid. In Images 1.5 and 1.6 our urban and rural ESPs do not make enough money to cover their expenses. This is unacceptable, and Minnesota can and should do more to relieve the debt burdens facing educators.

Finally, we hope policymakers consider the shocking findings from the Massachusetts Community Colleges that teachers and social workers will never be able to repay their loan burdens without state and federal aid. The Massachusetts Community College Guided Pathways to STEM used a grant by the U.S. Department of Labor to research how long it takes people to repay loans by field. Chart 1.5 compares the average repayment time for a sampling of professions.

It is important to remember that this work came from our colleagues in Massachusetts. The researchers derived many of the figures from federal averages, but they based some on average wages in Massachusetts. They also assumed that 10% of the individual's salary every month would go toward loan payments. In their calculations, an individual had no state or federal repayment grants. They also used a very generous interest rate of 6.6%. Policymakers should be shocked that based on these figures, teachers and social workers would never be able to repay their debts without government aid. This problem requires swift government intervention.

CHART 1.5: AVERAGE LOAN REPAYMENT BY CAREER FIELD

<i>FIELD</i>	<i>DEGREE</i>	<i>TOTAL TUITION</i>	<i>LENGTH OF REPAYMENT</i>
Nurse practitioner	Master's degree in nursing	\$64,000	11 years, 1 month
Electrical engineer	Bachelor of science in electrical engineering	\$40,976	7 years, 3 months
Dental hygienist	Associate degree in dental hygiene	\$22,692	5 years, 10 months
Social worker	Bachelor of arts in social work	\$39,880	Impossible * 10 years
Teacher	Master of arts in teaching	\$67,488	Impossible * 10 years

** We took these figures from work done by the Massachusetts Community Colleges. Many of these numbers are based on national averages, but we also acknowledge that some of the averages are based on Massachusetts. (Massachusetts Community Colleges).*

IMAGE 1.4: AVERAGE MINNESOTA TEACHER PAY AND MONTHLY EXPENSES

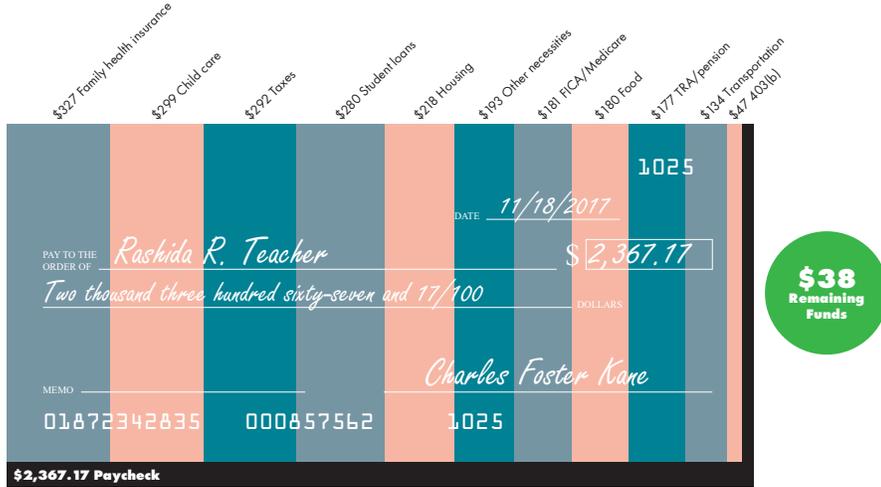


IMAGE 1.5A: AVERAGE AITKIN COUNTY ESP PAY AND MONTHLY EXPENSES

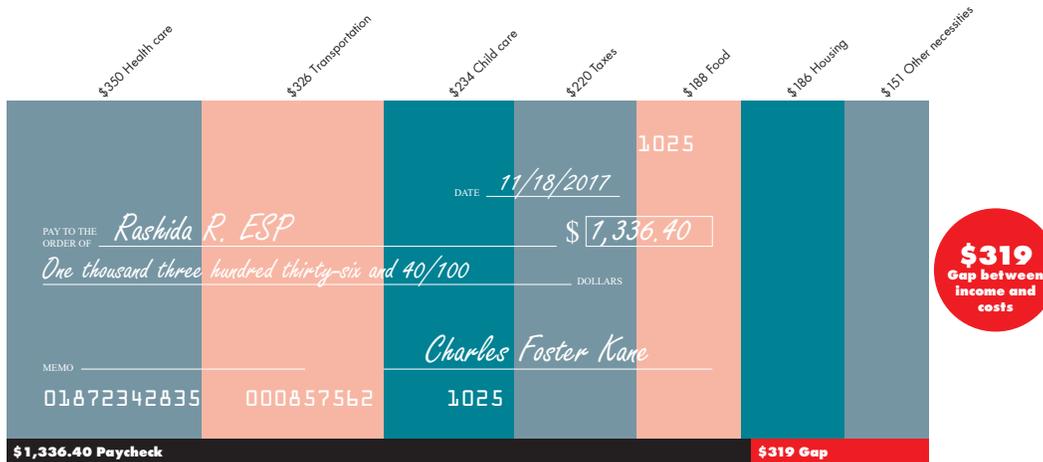
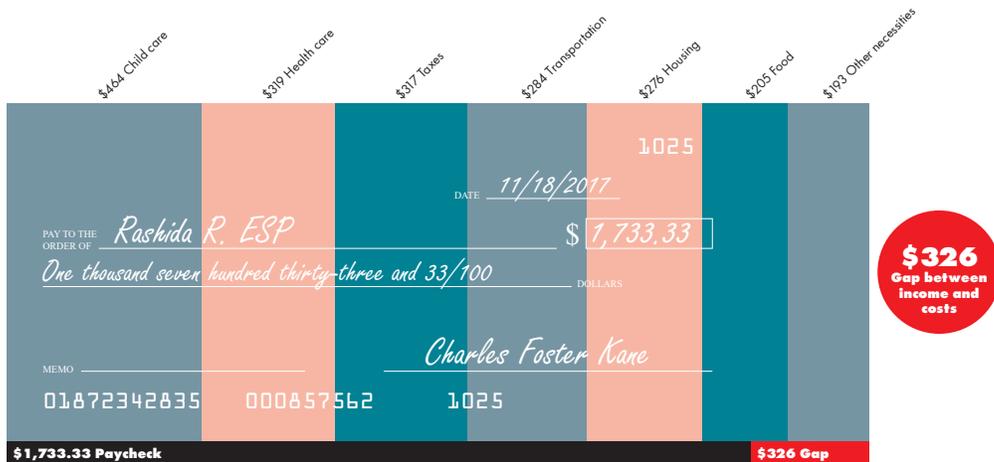


IMAGE 1.5B: AVERAGE HENNEPIN COUNTY ESP PAY AND MONTHLY EXPENSES



Educators Lack the Basic Resources for Their Classrooms

Educators also accrue many out-of-pocket expenses that other professionals do not face. Minnesota is not only paying educators at lower wages than other college graduates, but policymakers are also turning a blind eye to the fact that an overwhelming majority of public educators provide the basic supplies they need in their classrooms. Researchers at the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics conducted a national survey and found:

- Teachers spend \$479 dollars (on average, some spend more) annually on school supplies for their own classrooms.
- A higher percentage of teachers in traditional public schools (94%) spent their own money on classroom supplies than teachers in public charter schools (88%).
- At schools at which 75% or more students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, a higher percentage of teachers spent more than \$1,000. (NCES 2018-097, May 2018)

In addition, ESPs spend their own money to provide supplies for children. Many ESPs tell stories about bringing basic supplies like pencils and paper for students that come to school without enough resources. Unfortunately, administrators sometimes discipline these educators for these acts of kindness.

Minnesota’s policymakers do not buy the pens, tablets, and other supplies needed to run their legislative offices, so they should stop expecting underpaid educators to provide basic supplies needed to educate the students of Minnesota.

Minnesota’s policymakers do not buy the pens, tablets, and other supplies needed to run their legislative offices, so they should stop expecting underpaid educators to provide basic supplies needed to educate the students of Minnesota.

Educators Work Multiple Jobs to Earn Equitable Wages

We have documented how state and local governments fail to compensate public educators. However, many of Minnesota's educators show up every day and perform their hard work and then rush to a second or third job after school simply to pay their bills. Researchers with the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2018) recently determined:

- 18% of teachers had a job outside their school system. (NCES 2018-137)
- Nationally, regular, full-time public school teachers who supplemented their income earned an average (mean) of \$5,100 from jobs outside their school system. (NCES 2018-137, June 2018)

Policymakers should pay attention to two important facts about these numbers. First, the amount teachers earn in their second or third job is almost the same number as the teacher wage gap we previously discussed. Second, teachers are unable to spend equitable time on course preparations and non-instruction work because they are also laboring in other industries.

In addition, we know that very high numbers of ESPs dash from their school jobs to their night jobs. Again, as we have noted throughout this section, state and federal agencies fail to track this data.

This is not a difficult problem to understand. Minnesota's lawmakers need to fill the wage gap facing educators. Educators are burning out at seriously high rates because they are working 80-hour weeks to provide for their families. Minnesota's educators deserve wages that match their efforts.

Educators are Struggling With Their Mental Health

The above financial problems are not the only compensation and work stressors facing public educators. Many studies have shown that “teaching is regularly cited as one of the most stressful occupations” (Collie, Perry, & Martin, 2017, p. 4). The AFT regularly surveys public educators to report out the quality of their work environments. In the most recent study, the AFT asked 30,000 educators 80 questions about “the quality of their work life” and determined that the public educators face numerous work stressors, many of which policymakers can fix with more resources or simple policy changes (B.A.T., 2017, p. i).

26.4% of teachers reported being the victim of bullying at work.

U.S. teachers face chronic levels of stress at work and are more likely to identify as having “poor mental health” as compared to the average worker. Chart 1.6 compares the responses of educators to the entire U.S. working population on questions related to mental health. All the numbers are startling, but we draw particular attention to the fact that 26.4% of teachers reported being the victim of bullying at work. The adults educating the future citizens of this nation should be able to report to work and not face bullying by a student, parent, or colleague.

CHART 1.6: MENTAL HEALTH OF EDUCATORS COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGES

	PUBLIC EDUCATORS	ALL EMPLOYED AMERICANS
Reported work is “always” or “often” stressful	61%	30%
Reported being bullied at work	26.4%	7%
Reported “poor mental health” for 11 or more days	21 %	10%
Reported “fair” or “poor” physical health	18%	12.4%

* Figures obtained from (Delisle J. , March 2014, p. 4).

Finally, many educators are reaching a point of burnout due to what scholars refer to as “compassion fatigue” or secondary traumatic stress (STS). U.S. public school students are coming to school with unprecedented levels of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. We address the trauma level of the student population in another section of this paper. However, it is important to remember that public school teachers are the individuals tasked with helping students overcome adversity. This emotional labor comes with a personal price, and policymakers need to provide resources to help educators combat work stress.

Many educators are reaching a point of burnout due to what scholars refer to as “compassion fatigue” or secondary traumatic stress (STS).

Fowler (2015) has documented that, “secondary traumatic stress (STS) wears us out—physically, emotionally, and mentally. It’s especially prevalent when we feel overwhelmed and work in unsupportive and demanding environments” (p. 31). Unfortunately, social norms expect teachers to be superheroes capable of facing all adversity without any sacrifice to their own mental health. However, Fowler (2015) is quick to remind policymakers “teachers are not immune to human emotions. No smart board or dry erase marker magically protects us from feeling another’s pain. STS reactions may seep or crash into our systems” (p. 31). State lawmakers need to provide better benefits and worksite relief to address this growing mental health concern.

Educators of Color Face Tremendous Institutional Stressors

All educators face stressors at work, but Minnesota's educators of color (EOCs) face unique and heightened levels of work stress. Carter Andrews and her colleagues (2019) have noted that stakeholders need to

consider how the narrative that has been constructed regarding the underrepresentation of TOCs in U.S. schools suppresses an explicit examination of and response to how... historical and contemporary legislation and policy create(d) a pushout and keep out process for recruiting and retaining TOCs. (p. 9)

Minnesota's educators of color (EOCs) face unique and heightened levels of work stress.

These scholars correctly argued that "the often toxic environmental and operational conditions for TOCs in their preparation programs and workplaces have negative implications for teacher retention and attrition" (Carter Andrews, et al., 2019, p. 6). EOCs face the same bullying, harassment, and structural stress as their White peers. However, they also have to manage the difficult world of systemic, and overt, racism. In addition, Minnesota is facing a shortage of EOCs, so many of them have to move through this stress in isolation.

Black male and Black female teachers face particularly difficult environments at work. First, research has shown that both categories often face stereotypes about their quality of teaching (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Carter Andrews, et al., 2019; Acosta, 2019). Second, these educators also find themselves caught between impossible expectations that they are capable of playing divergent roles simultaneously. Bristol and Goings (2019) have argued that

previous research on the experiences of Black male educators have found that they are often touted for their ability to serve as disciplinarians, saviors, and role models (Brown, 2012) for "troubled" Black boys (Carey, 2018; Nelson, 2016; Wallace, 2017). Moreover, Black male teachers are rarely recognized for their content knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and ability to teach all children (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2018). (p. 51)

Black male educators often face racist questions about their intelligence, and they must navigate the unspoken expectation that they should mentor all the Black male students. These stressors are particularly difficult for Black male teachers who may be the only black male staff member in a building. Any discussion of educator mental health must look at these systemic problems for EOCs.

They also noted, “because of their hypervisibility as well as negative perceptions of their teaching abilities, Black male teachers may enter hostile work environments and encounter colleagues who will both covertly and overtly treat them as social outcasts (Bristol & Goings, 2019, p. 51). Black male educators often face racist questions about their intelligence, and they must navigate the unspoken expectation that they should mentor all the Black male students. These stressors are particularly difficult for Black male teachers who may be the only black male staff member in a building. Any discussion of educator mental health must look at these systemic problems for EOCs.

Many scholars have shown that Black female educators have their academic credentials questioned while being expected to be more nurturing.

Black female educators also face similar systemic barriers and racist stereotypes. Acosta (2019) confirmed that Black women in education face “pedagogical marginalization.” Scholars understand this specific social aggression as “the reification of race and gender stereotypes that force Black women to shoulder the burden of proof when it comes to their race and gender status” (Acosta, 2019, p. 26). Many scholars have shown that Black female educators have their academic credentials questioned while being expected to be more nurturing. Scholars have shown that “race and gender microaggressions experienced by effective BWEs is implicated in the significant decrease in African American educators in the profession” (Carter Andrews, et al., 2019, p. 1). Policymakers need to have a serious conversation about the intersection of race and gender stereotypes that are driving women of color away from the profession of teaching.

Educators of color must navigate systemic racism as well as overt aggressions coming from parents, colleagues, students, and administrators. This heavy burden can add to the mental health problems these educators are already carrying.

Educators of color must navigate systemic racism as well as overt aggressions coming from parents, colleagues, students, and administrators. This heavy burden can add to the mental health problems these educators are already carrying. Furthermore, these educators “feel like they have to prove their worth as educators, noting being looked over for job advancements, reduced to disciplinarian roles, and not being respected as subject area experts” (Carter Andrews, et al., 2019, p. 8). Policymakers and administrators need to give significant attention to the systemic racism adding to the stress of EOCs.

Solutions

We have documented the compensation shortfalls and workplace stressors that burden public educators. We now turn our attention to potential solutions to these problems.

SOLUTION #1: PROTECT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS: UNIONS HELP CURB WAGE DISPARITIES

Numerous scholars have documented that teachers feel like they lack voice and influence in their districts and schools. However, unionized teachers see collective action as a tool to influence real change in the education system. In addition, unions are a strong protection against further attacks on educator compensation. Davis and Gould (2015) have documented that

one key factor in the divergence between pay and productivity is the widespread erosion of collective bargaining that has diminished the wages of both union and nonunion workers. In 1945, the share of U.S. workers who were a member of a union reached a high of 33.4 percent. This share then declined—largely after 1979—to 11.1 percent by 2014. (p. 14)

Scholars have also confirmed, “Unions are also important for public-sector workers...public-employee unions in full collective bargaining states (with agency shop clauses) do raise total compensation to their private sector equivalents” (Davis & Gould, November 2015, p. 15). For these reasons, Minnesota lawmakers should protect the collective bargaining rights of workers.

Allegreto and Mishel (2016) documented that, “collective bargaining helps to abate the teacher wage gap. In 2015, teachers not represented by a union had a -25.5 percent wage gap—and the gap was 6 percentage points smaller for unionized teachers” (p. 4).

Additionally, collective bargaining has historically yielded better wages for educators. Allegreto and Mishel (2016) documented that, “collective bargaining helps to abate the teacher wage gap. In 2015, teachers not represented by a union had a -25.5 percent wage gap—and the gap was 6 percentage points smaller for unionized teachers” (p. 4). Graph 1.6 documents how unionization shrinks the pay gap for teachers who collectively bargain their contracts.

Unionization can also help alleviate the added gender-based and race-based pay gaps experienced by some educators. Jabbar et al (2018) described the benefits of unions by writing,

Unions in education historically helped to close gender and race-based wage gaps... By removing unions, there is the risk of introducing more discretion and room for implicit bias in hiring and promotion decisions. In other words, when school and district leaders have more discretion over salary decisions, promotions, and job descriptions, there is more room for subjective decision making, which relies greatly on individuals’ inherent racial and gender biases. (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018, p. 773)

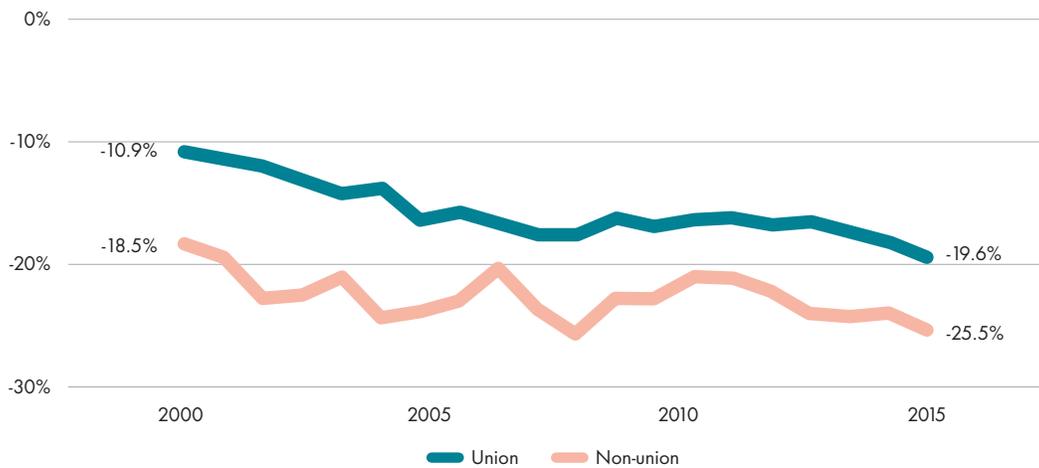
Davis and Gould (2015) have also confirmed:

1. Unions have been proven to provide women with higher wages and better job quality... Women in unions also experience a smaller gender wage gap than nonunionized women. (p. 14)
2. Women in unions also have higher rates of both health insurance coverage and enrollment in retirement plans...unionized women are more likely to have access to a range of paid leave, from paid sick days, vacations, and holidays to paid family and medical leave. (p. 15)
3. The decline in unionization is bad not only for women in unions, but for all women, as unions often set higher industry standards and wages that affect nonunionized workers too. When unions are strong, their benefits and protections spread to nonunion workers as well. (p. 15)

Graph 1.7 documents the financial gains unionized female educators have made as compared to female educators not in a union. Policymakers should halt all efforts to break unions or prevent collective bargaining. In addition, we view the exclusion of Tier 1 teachers from the statutory bargaining unit as a union-busting effort on the part of some legislators. We ask policymakers to correct this with future legislation.

GRAPH 1.6: UNIONS HELP CLOSE THE TEACHER PAY GAP

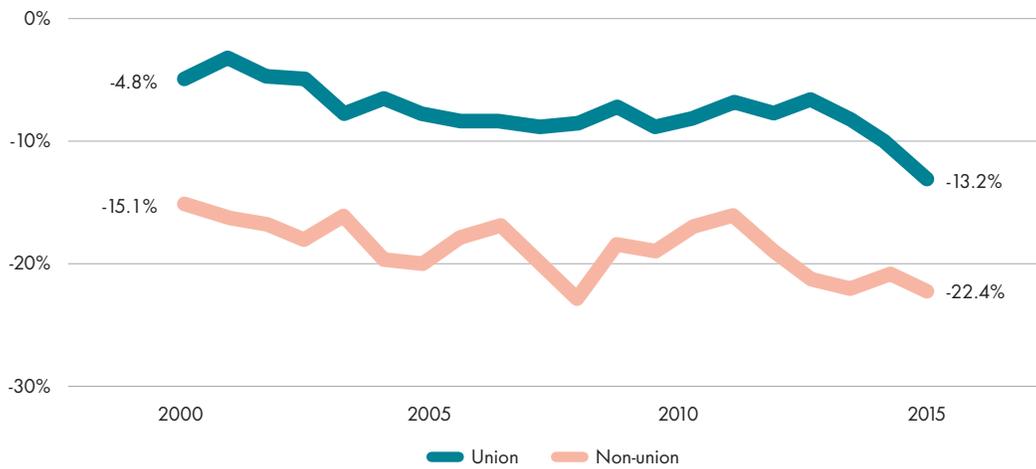
Teachers in a union have a smaller wage gap. Wage gap between public school teachers and similar workers, by union status, 1996-2015



*Note: Figure compares weekly wages. Regression-adjusted estimates include controls for age (quartic), education, race/ethnicity, geographical region, marital status, and gender for the pooled sample. Data are for workers age 18-64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Union representation is defined as being a union member or being covered by a union contract. Source: Authors' analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data. Economic Policy Institute. Graph 1.6 reproduced with permission from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Gap is Wider Than Ever*, Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Wage & Employment Dynamics at the University of California, Berkeley, August 2016 (p. 12).*

GRAPH 1.7: UNIONS HELP CLOSE THE TEACHER PAY GAP FOR WOMEN

The wage gap is smaller for female teachers in a union. Wage gap between female public school teachers and similar female workers, by union status, 1996-2015



*Note: Figure compares weekly wages. Regression-adjusted estimates include controls for age (quartic), education, race/ethnicity, geographical region, marital status, and gender for the pooled sample. Data are for workers age 18-64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Union representation is defined as being a union member or being covered by a union contract. Source: Authors' analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data. Economic Policy Institute. Graph 1.7 reproduced with permission from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Gap is Wider Than Ever*, Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Wage & Employment Dynamics at the University of California, Berkeley, August 2016 (p. 13).*

SOLUTION #2: INCREASE TEACHER PAY AND IMPROVE BENEFITS

Minnesota needs to raise the wages of ALL educators. Baker, Farrie, and Sciarra (2018) have correctly stated:

A state's ability to attract and retain high quality teachers is a fundamental component of a strong and equitable school system. Because teachers' salaries and benefits make up the bulk of school budgets, a fair school funding system is required to maintain an equitable distribution of high quality teachers in all districts. One of the most important ways that states can ensure that teaching jobs remain desirable in the job market is to provide competitive wages. (p. 23)

They also have stressed that on average, "teachers beginning their careers at age 25 earn about 82% of what non-teachers earn" (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2018, p. 24).

Minnesota should require all teachers start at a salary that is not below \$50,000.

Minnesota should require all teachers start at a salary that is not below \$50,000. Minnesota could follow the example of Connecticut. Lawmakers in that state, between 1986 and 1991, combated "teacher shortages by increasing teachers' salaries in combination with other strategic initiatives" (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, May 2017, p. 23). Podolsky et al. (2017) confirmed, "Connecticut raised minimum teacher salaries to a state-recommended level and provided state equalization aid to incentivize districts to voluntarily raise their salaries to the minimum" (p. 23). State interventions work, and lawmakers should direct money to increase educator wages across the state.

Minnesota should also institute a policy that establishes mandatory sick time, personal leave time, and vacation time for all educators. In addition, districts should be required to pay all educators for their missed time due to inclement weather determinations. It is unfair to force these educators, especially ESPs, to forego wages due to decisions beyond their control.

Minnesota should also institute a policy that establishes mandatory sick time, personal leave time, and vacation time for all educators. In addition, districts should be required to pay all educators for their missed time due to inclement weather determinations. It is unfair to force these educators, especially ESPs, to forego wages due to decisions beyond their control.

SOLUTION #3: OFFER PAID FAMILY LEAVE FOR ALL EDUCATORS

The United States is behind all other nations in the area of paid family leave. The federal government has delegated this responsibility to states and private organizations. Minnesota should become a leader by providing paid family leave for all Minnesota educators. It is unfortunate that “due to this widespread lack of paid family leave, workers have to make difficult choices between their careers and their caregiving responsibilities precisely when they need their paychecks the most, such as following the birth of a child or when they or a loved one falls ill” (Davis & Gould, November 2015, p. 19). Minnesota should provide educators the resources to care for their own families in the same way they care for the children of Minnesota every day.

We also see paid family leave as a measure that would greatly reduce the gender pay gap. We know, “the lack of paid family leave particularly affects women, as they currently take on the lion’s share of unpaid care work” (Davis & Gould, November 2015, pp. 19-20). Davis and Gould (2015) have argued that this also adds to the career-wide pay gap many women face. They have stated

because women are still largely expected to take on larger shares of household labor, many women leave the paid labor force to care for loved ones when the need arises, forcing these women to forgo opportunities for career advancement and to end up with lower lifetime earnings (and therefore lower retirement income) than their male peers. (p. 20)

Paid family leave can help fix this problem. Researchers have shown that “when women are supported by a comprehensive paid family leave policy, they are more likely to stay attached to the labor force” (Davis & Gould, November 2015, p. 20). Minnesota should be a national leader on this important issue.

SOLUTION #4: INCREASE EFFORTS TO RELIEVE LOAN DEBT

Minnesota lawmakers need to give critical attention to student loan debt of all educators. In particular, policymakers should:

- Shift funding back to the state's traditional ratio of a higher percentage of funding through state appropriation and reduce the reliance on tuition. Reliance on tuition is now reliance on the acquisition of student loan debt.
- Provide education-funding structures that target those students and communities with the greatest financial need.
- Focus higher education funding on communities with declining populations so that they benefit from sustained investment from the state via our higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are and should be cornerstones of local communities that drive investment and community building, including making Greater Minnesota communities places where people continue to want to live.
- Avoid creating funding structures that pit two-year and four-year colleges against each other. All are a vital part of a higher education structure.
- Make investments in higher education that balance affordability for the state in accordance with other priorities such as equitable funding for K-12 education, transportation, housing, health care, and ending economic disparities.

SOLUTION #5: CHALLENGE SYSTEMIC RACISM WITH CRITICAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Policymakers need to provide educators with the autonomy to build and support what Kohli (2019) has termed "critical professional development" which is "a development space that frames 'teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society'" (pp. 39-40). All educators need constant and continual professional development that helps them dismantle racism and build equitable schools.

SOLUTION#6: TARGETED POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Minnesota lawmakers can address many of the problems listed in this section by:

1. Ensuring all ESPs earn an hourly wage that starts at a minimum of \$15 an hour.
2. Adding preschool teachers to the teacher bargaining unit, so they receive equitable compensation.
3. Allowing Tier 1 teachers to be part of the teacher bargaining unit.
4. Reinstating the funding to districts to support lane movement.
5. Considering measures to hold administrators accountable for slowing educator attrition.

SOLUTION #7: ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR EDUCATORS

We offer these items as ideas Minnesota lawmakers can use to target specific problems with immediate fixes, but, these items would be unnecessary if legislators pass legislation to help with solutions 5-6. However, the state could follow the examples documented by Yafee (2016), which include:

- Offering financial incentives for senior faculty to announce retirements at earlier dates. Hoquiam School District in Washington benefited from offering \$2,000 to senior teachers who provided notice of retirement by February 1.
- Subsidizing housing for educators, particularly in places with high costs of living, like what the districts have done for educators in Oakland, California.
- Developing services to help teachers find affordable housing, like Idaho, Mountain View School District #244.
- Funding and creating spousal hire policies, which helps attract families to rural areas.
- Giving money to build more full-service community schools which will alleviate many of the problems we mention in this section.
- Creating signing bonuses that young educators can use for moving expenses (Yafee, 2016).

Concluding Thoughts

Minnesota lawmakers need to provide proper compensation for every educator in this state. This state should lead the way in efforts to eliminate the professional wage gap that burdens educators and their families.

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