

What's Keeping People From Becoming Teachers? An Eye-Popping To-Do List, for One



By [Alyson Klein](#) — September 27, 2023 ⌚ 1 min read



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Teachers have a seemingly never-ending to-do list: Make bulletin boards. Plan lessons. Connect with parents. Do bus duty. Chaperone the prom. Write college recommendation letters. Run active shooter drills. Participate in professional learning communities. Learn new software. And on and on.

Do prospective teachers eye those job responsibilities and say, “no thanks, I’ll find another line of work?” Ninety percent of educators surveyed by the Ed Week Research Center say yes.

In fact, more than half—56 percent—fully agree that the demands placed on teachers are too high and that is why it has been hard to attract and retain people in the profession, and 34 percent partly agree with that perspective. The survey of 1,301 principals, teachers, and district leaders was conducted in June and July.

There’s data to support their opinions. Between the 2008-09 and 2018-19 academic years, the number of people completing a teacher education program [declined by almost a third](#), according to a report released last year by the [American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education](#). Traditional teacher-preparation programs saw the largest decline—35 percent—but alternative programs experienced drops, too, the report found.

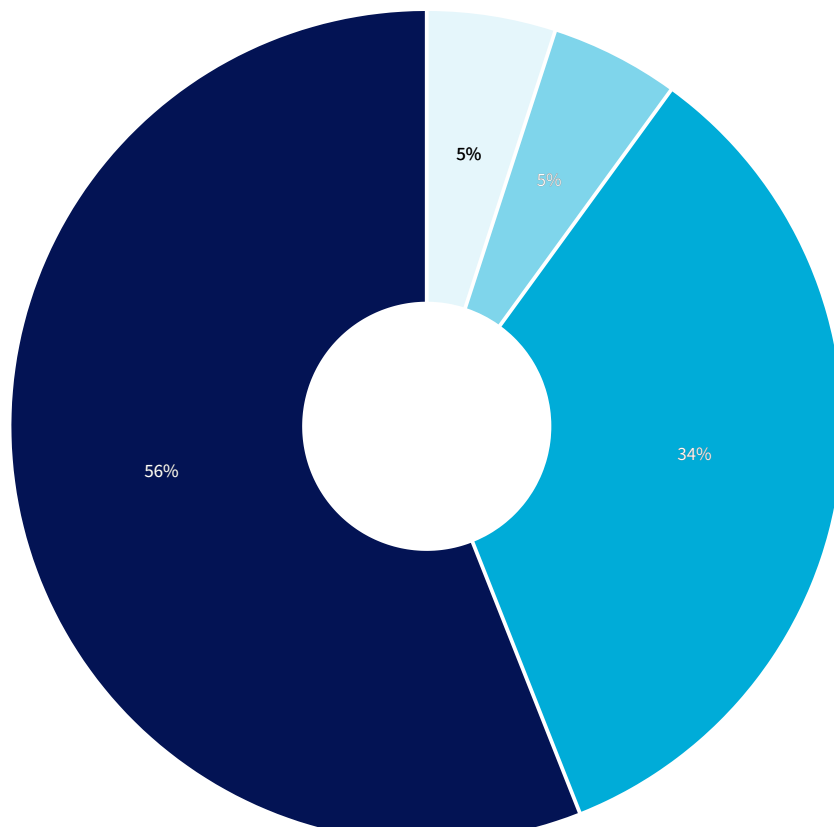
What’s more, the typical teacher works 54 hours per week, 25 of them spent teaching students, according to the first annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey commissioned by the Winston School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College and conducted by the EdWeek Research Center. Just 37 percent of teachers felt they had control over their schedules, the Merrimack survey found.

In an interview with Education Week, one teacher describes her typical day like this: “Teaching is like putting on a play every day. Costumes, practice, rehearsal, all of that is involved but it’s every single day,” said Louise Williamson, a nearly 30-year veteran teacher at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District near San Diego. Williamson is also a fellow with Teach Plus, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the teaching profession.

Below is EdWeek Research Center survey data outlining educators’ views on how ballooning responsibilities are hindering recruitment and retention of teachers.

The demands placed on teachers are too high and that is why it has been hard to attract and retain people in the profession.

- Completely disagree
- Partly disagree
- Partly agree
- Completely agree



A Flourish chart

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