

The Current State of Education



A closer look into the role higher education has on the teacher shortage across America

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In the United States, there is a teacher shortage. That much has been true for a while, with the severity of it depending on the subject matter and location.

If you were to survey a random group of people about the teacher shortage, you would encounter a variety of different answers. Most would be centered around the public education system as it stands today with a focus on the bad behavior of students, lack of support from the administration and low salaries.

Although there is an overall dissatisfaction among many teachers in the workforce already, the issue runs even deeper with fewer teachers entering the workforce in general.

According to Pew Research Center, the percentage of students attaining education degrees has decreased 19% when compared to 2000-01.

However, that brings up the question: why?

First, education faces the same troubles as many other humanities and liberal arts degrees. Respect for STEM majors has grown, while the respect for majors outside of STEM has decreased, with education being one of the hardest hit.

Brianna Johnson, a sophomore in the Elementary Deaf and Hard of Hearing education program, explained her experience.

“I would say a struggle of being in this program is the amount of resources, outreach and immersion opportunities we have. For most of us, we really heavily rely on gaining experience before it is time for internships and student teaching. It can be hard to get that, especially in the DeafEd program because there are not too many volunteer and outreach opportunities that happen every semester,” Johnson said.

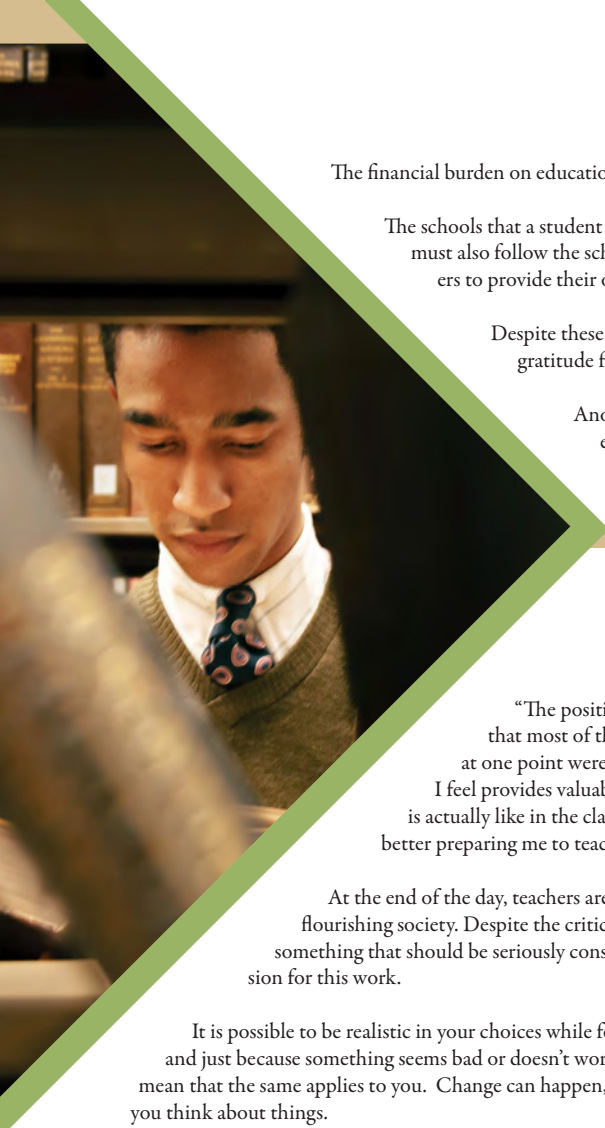
The environment for education majors poses a problem as well. For some like Johnson, the tight-knit community works in their favor. She praises the fact that she can curate such a strong connection with other students in her major.

This, however, is not the same for all students, as some were fearful that sharing any negative experience with the program would jeopardize their place in the program.

The criticism heard most often, and seen in many programs across the country, is the unpaid internship or student teacher requirement that is needed for licensure.

At UT, senior education majors are required to student teach every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. On top of this requirement, a full schedule of college curriculum is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.





The financial burden on education majors is high, and with most of their time focused on school and work, it is difficult for many to get a part-time job.

The schools that a student teacher may be assigned to can be up to 30 miles away, and students are not provided transportation. Student teachers must also follow the school's dress code, which means purchasing a new wardrobe for some. This is compounded by the need for student teachers to provide their own materials.

Despite these complaints, many education majors remain in the College of Education because teaching is their passion. Many express gratitude for the education program and everything that they have learned. After all, every major has its downsides.

Another student in the Child and Family Studies (CFS) program with a concentration in Early Childhood Education, expressed love for her program, specifically her professors.

"The positives that I have seen are that most of the CFS instructors are or at one point were school teachers, which I feel provides valuable insight into what life is actually like in the classroom. I feel like this is better preparing me to teach," the student said.

At the end of the day, teachers are an important aspect of a flourishing society. Despite the critics, education is something that should be seriously considered if you have a passion for this work.

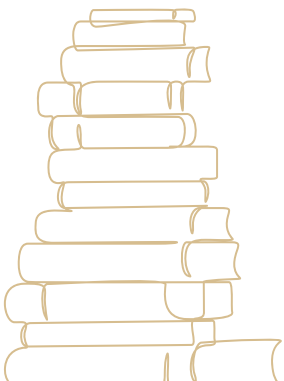
It is possible to be realistic in your choices while following your dreams, and just because something seems bad or doesn't work for one person doesn't mean that the same applies to you. Change can happen, and it starts with how you think about things.

For many, that change is the perception of education majors as the "arts and crafts" major.

"We have hard classes just like you do, and treating us like it is easier to learn about the best way to educate children and the many factors that go into education is just minimizing the work that we do. At the end of the day, teachers are the ones who will be educating your children, so the least you can do is treat them with respect," the student said.

After all, someone has to teach the new generation how to be better than the generation who came before them.

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Model: Jalen Miguel

