

'It's Not Worth It To Become A Teacher At This Point,' Veteran Educator Says

When single mom Callie Hammond wants to buy something for her daughters, she says she has to choose between spending money on them or on the high school English students she teaches each day.

Hammond, a teacher in North Carolina for 22 years, says she buys supplies for her students with her own money. She hasn't gotten new textbooks since 2009. If she wants new ones, she says she has to go to other high schools and beg.

"I'm at a school trying to make better lives for those kids, but I'm not able to go out and make a better life for my own kids. And that's not fair," Hammond says in a video released by the progressive advocacy group Progress North Carolina.

According to an analysis by the National Education Association, North Carolina ranked near the bottom of U.S. states in expenditures per student for 2012-2013. A separate study found that North Carolina teachers' pay was among the lowest for public school educators.

"I would say if you're in North Carolina, it's not worth it to become a teacher at this point. It's really not," Hammond says in the video.

June Atkinson, North Carolina's superintendent of public instruction, said the state has not supported its teachers.

"North Carolina has not invested in its teaching force as it should," Atkinson told WTVD.

Cuts to education have become a central issue in the race for U.S. Senate in North Carolina between Democratic Sen. Kay Hagan and her Republican opponent, North Carolina House Speaker Thom Tillis. A recent ad accused Tillis of cutting \$500 million in education funding, forcing teachers to pay for school supplies on their own. Tillis has released his own ad, saying he actually increased school funding and teacher pay.

For Hammond, it's discouraging to see legislators so far removed from the classroom cut education funding.

"The legislature that we have now has made it abundantly clear that they think public schools are broken," Hammond says in the video. "They really have no ideas what's going on in the schools.

"While we say every day: 'Education is the key to future success,' our state doesn't believe it."

Billy McNeil replies...

Let's see, above average starting wages, state pensions, the best benefit package on the planet, student loan forgiveness, 9 month work year (I'm aware of continuing ed., etc.), guaranteed advancement, and tenure. Seems like a terrible life? For someone that cares about children/education, doesn't seem too bad.

Bill Bushing said...

As a former classroom teacher at high school and university levels, the state of education today mirrors the disrespect society as a whole has shown to educators and the "value" placed on education in the budgeting process. It doesn't take a lot of money (budget-wise) to teach well, but poorly paid teachers are affected in terms of negative self worth.

I taught for 12 years. My experience at the high school level was at a private boarding school which in many ways is far worse than a regular public school classroom. We were charged not only with preparing and teaching our classes, but with dormitory supervision, coaching, extracurricular activities, discipline, etc.

I once had an internationally known psychiatrist (who had two kids at the school) tell us that we were not doing our job. I stood up and told him that if he wanted to look at who was NOT doing THEIR job, it was the parents who sent their children to the school so they didn't have to face the challenge of parenting. To his credit, when he returned to the school a month later, he said I was right. As a nice ending to that, his sons are both friends of mine today nearly 40 years later.

Loren Vanportfleet says...

I really love how the uninformed talk about teachers and paid vacations. Teachers do not get paid vacations. Teachers have a contract that is based upon number of days of school. If the teacher want to get paid for the 9 months the school is in session, they can. However, they will not get paid for the 3 months they do not work. Most teachers elect to have their pay spread out over 12 months instead of 9. Those employed by business and industry do get a paid vacation. The paid vacation starts at 1 week and can work up to 6 weeks. It is time the public understands how a teacher contract works as opposed to those employed in business and industry.

Pam Bennett responds...

Don't be disingenuous. Days off are days off. 3 months in the summer, 2 weeks at the holidays, and a spring break. And, in most states, snow/weather days that amount to at least an additional 5-7 days off. And, someone to fill in for you when you are sick. No one working in the business world gets that. In fact, most people in the business world are scared to death of taking vacation or sick/personal days they have coming to them. I think teachers have a thankless job, but your statement is ridiculous. I have relatives in my family and when I am sweating bullets at work, they are living it up on their boats and going on cruises, and praying for snow. In fact, they imply that I am the loser because I work so much. So yes, teachers may make \$45,00 a year, but they work about 7 months of the year. Not a bad deal.