



Arkansas House Newsletter

April 29, 2022

Thanking Our Teachers



Teachers are the heart of our educational system. They inspire hope and instill a life-long love of learning. The week of May 2 is National Teacher Appreciation Week. It's a perfect time to show our appreciation to the **41,000 teachers** in our state who lend their passion and skills to educate our students.

The commitment and innovation of our teachers have helped lead our schools through one of the most challenging times for education in recent years.

There are many ways Arkansans can show their appreciation such as participating or planning events with your PTA, sending heartfelt cards and messages, or offering discounts at your place of businesses.

Making sure our teachers feel valued and want to continue the profession is an important factor in determining our funding for education. The House and Senate Education Committee is currently conducting the Educational Adequacy Study. This study evaluates the entire spectrum of public education to determine whether students receive equal opportunity for an adequate education. Members spend a great deal of time reviewing teacher salaries and recruitment as part of the study.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed legislation increasing the minimum pay for teachers. In the most

recent Regular Session, we passed Act 680 which seeks to raise the average salary by creating the Teacher Salary Equalization Fund. The bill outlines a statewide target average of \$51,822 for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. This bill would direct the Department of Education to disperse money from the Equalization Fund to districts whose average teacher salary falls below \$51,822.

The General Assembly is also consistently reviewing ways to recruit more qualified teachers. In the 2021 Regular Session we passed ACT 646 which provides that by August 1, 2022, each public school district and open enrollment public charter school in the state shall prepare a three-year teacher and administrator recruitment and retention plan. The act provides that the Department of Education shall set goals for increasing the number of teachers and administrators of minority races and ethnicities in this state.

We will continue to explore ways to recruit and retain teachers in the months ahead. **Meanwhile, let's all take a moment this week to let the teachers in our communities know how truly valuable their work has been.**