

# A High-Quality Education Begins With High-Quality Teachers: It's Time To Invest in an Educator Workforce Strategy



Baton Rouge is defined as much by its people as by its landmarks. From the State Capitol to Friday nights on the Bluff or in Tiger Stadium, the city reflects a deep-rooted culture shaped by tradition, resilience, and community pride.

At the heart of that identity are the people who live and work here – individuals from diverse backgrounds who share a commitment to each other and to the next generation. That collective investment has long been a defining strength of East Baton Rouge Parish.

Today, however, that strength faces a growing challenge as more and more educators leave the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) in search of better compensation, stronger support, and more sustainable career paths. The teacher-talent pipeline is stretched too thin across the United States, not just here in Baton Rouge.

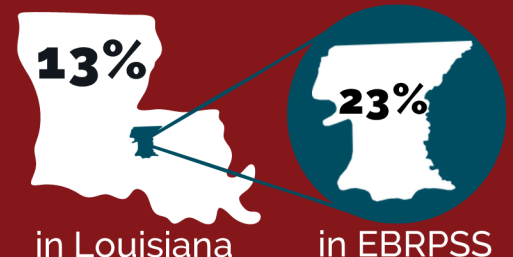
Baton Rouge can differentiate itself by addressing the issue head-on. Louisiana is a state that knows how to tackle workforce challenges; it takes the development and execution of a targeted, comprehensive set of solutions. While EBRPSS has taken steps to mitigate its workforce challenges, it must recognize and respond more strategically, holistically, and urgently.

## Educator Workforce Facts

In the most recently reported state data, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) accounted for **1 in 5 teaching vacancies across Louisiana**.

While some progress has been made thanks to Superintendent Cole's work to keep this issue at the forefront, the challenge is far from solved. Filling vacancies is not enough. We must ensure that every classroom is led by a high-quality educator. Research tells us that one of the most important factors in a child's education is the quality of the teacher standing in front of them each day.

### Average Educator Attrition Rate



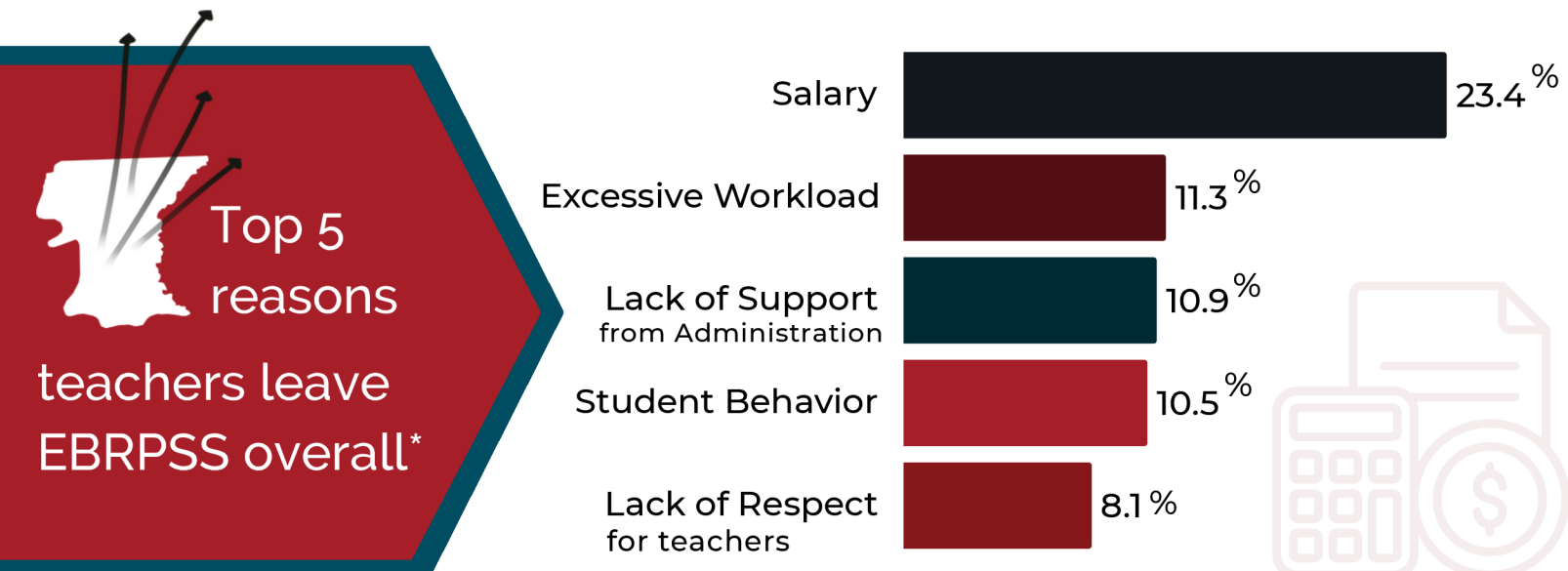
**EBRPSS accounts for 20% of all teacher vacancies in Louisiana and has the highest teacher attrition rate in the state**, meaning that even when educators begin their careers here, they do not stay. Turnover is especially high in under-resourced schools in low-income areas; among early-career educators; and in high-need subject areas such as special education.

Additionally:

- Nearly **1 in 4 teachers** in EBRPSS leave the district/the profession each year (attrition rate).
- The district spends up to **\$25,000 per teacher** to recruit and onboard replacements.
- With a teaching staff of approximately 4,000, the district will spend up to \$25M on recruitment and onboarding each year.
- **70% of teachers leave the district within five years.**
- Many neighboring school districts offer higher salaries or more resources, making them more competitive for teaching talent.
- **Fewer** young professionals are entering the teaching profession overall.
- There are a total of **5,800 employees** working in EBRPSS, according to last year's budget reports.
- The total budget is \$823M, or \$21,025 per student.
- **71% of the budget** goes to salaries and benefits.
- EBRPSS reported 51 **teaching vacancies** as of February 2026, down from 107 the previous year.

Behind these numbers is a system under strain — and students who are paying the price. Eager to better understand why so many teachers leave, the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students Action conducted a 14-day online survey of teachers who have worked in or are currently working in EBRPSS to gather their experiences, desires, and needs.

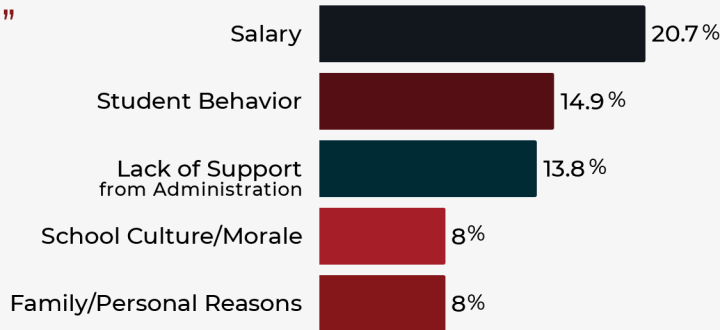
Out of 109 self-selected respondents from across the parish, 51% identified higher pay as the number one factor in choosing a career outside of EBRPSS. Over 93% of the 109 respondents identified salary as a “very important” or “important” factor when deciding where to teach.



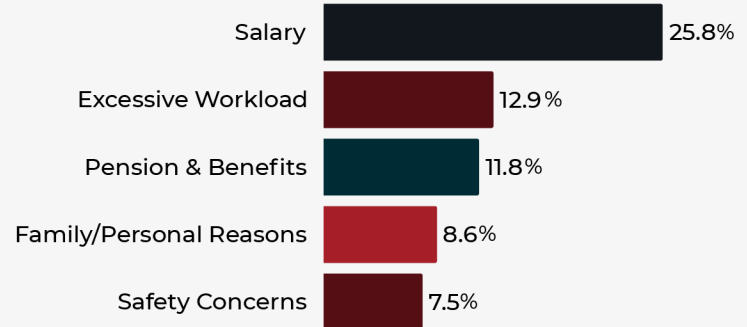
\*Across all 109 respondents, the most frequently selected reasons for leaving or considering leaving.

Educators who teach or have taught in schools in what they consider “North Baton Rouge,” “Mid-City,” and “South Baton Rouge” reported the following as their top 5 reasons for leaving.

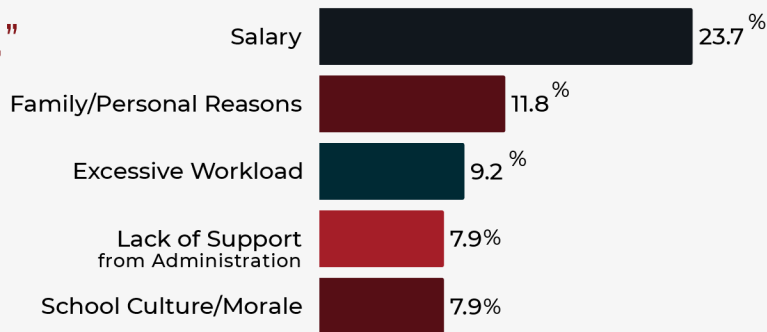
**In the “North,”** student-facing issues like behavior and school culture or morale are significantly more prominent than the city average.



**In “Mid-City,”** educators are more concerned with long-term financial stability and the daily “grind” of the workload.



**In the “South,”** personal circumstances and school environment play a larger role alongside compensation.



While compensation is the leading factor across the board, regional differences reveal deeper challenges:

- **North Baton Rouge:** Student behavior and administrative support are major concerns
- **Mid-City:** Workload, compensation, and long-term financial stability dominate
- **South Baton Rouge:** Personal factors and excessive workload play a larger role

It cannot be overstated that this is not a one-dimensional problem, and it will not be solved with a single solution. Baton Rouge has an opportunity to take a strategic and forward-thinking approach to workforce challenges, aligning with how other major sectors of the economy respond to talent shortages — by anticipating needs, leveraging data, and deploying a full range of tools to act with urgency and precision.

In an increasingly competitive market for teaching talent, EBRPSS must clearly define and communicate its value proposition. This requires anchoring decisions in a consistent set of values and executing a coherent, long-term vision that positions the district as an employer of choice.

That is where the school board comes in.

# An Educator Workforce Talent Strategy Is Crucial

The future of public education in East Baton Rouge Parish depends on the city's ability to intentionally attract, develop, and retain great educators. For too long, workforce-specific conversations about "brain drain" have excluded the education sector, yet the reality is that when our most talented young professionals leave Baton Rouge, we lose not only one generation of human capital but the very people we rely on to shape the next generation in our classrooms.

The absence of an educator talent strategy has real consequences for students. Without a plan to address the talent problem, teacher quality varies widely across schools, and access to opportunity becomes uneven. The students who need the most stability and support are too often those experiencing the highest teacher turnover and the least experienced educators. This is not sustainable — unless our goal is to continue to underdeliver for both students and teachers.

A proactive, focused, comprehensive educator talent strategy will provide a path forward, ensuring that every school has access to high-quality teaching and strong leadership. The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board has both the authority and the flexibility to act, but meaningful progress will require a holistic approach: one that aligns recruitment, compensation, professional development, and leadership support.

At its core, this is about more than staffing — it is about creating the conditions where great educators choose to stay and thrive. Competitive pay may bring teachers to the district, but it will not keep them here. Retention depends on whether educators feel supported, valued, and empowered by leaders who understand the realities of today's classrooms. That is why any effective talent strategy must also prioritize leadership. We must invest in developing school leaders who create environments where teachers want to work and grow — leaders equipped with the resources, training, and support to meet the urgency of this moment.

Every child in East Baton Rouge Parish deserves access to a high-quality education. And the single most important factor in achieving that goal is a high-quality educator in every classroom, every day.

## The School Board Has An Opportunity.

The school board must act with intention and urgency to build a system that not only attracts talent but sustains it. If we get this right, Baton Rouge can become a model for what is possible when a community commits to investing in its educators — and, ultimately, in its future.

