

State takeover of Fort Worth ISD leads to 800 resignations, 569% increase in uncertified teachers

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The Texas Education Agency (TEA) took over Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) in October 2025, due to low test scores at a single school for five consecutive years. Within three months of the move, nearly 800 teachers had resigned their positions, which is more than the total for the entire previous school year.

To make up for the shortfall, FWISD has had a massive increase in the number of uncertified teachers.

Over the entire 2025-26 school year, 1,026 teachers resigned, out of a total of approximately 4,700 (one-sixth of the total), compared with 648 for the previous year. To start the 2026-27 school, the district will employ, at the most recent count, 308 uncertified teachers, compared with 40 to 50 over the past five years. The increase since the previous school year is 569 percent, when there were 46 uncertified teachers.

To become certified in Texas, teachers must have a Bachelor's degree, complete an approved educator preparation program, pass certification exams, submit a state application, and pass a criminal background check. Under Texas law, uncertified teachers may not teach core classes. However, FWISD's Board of Managers, which the TEA brought in to replace the elected school board, applied for a waiver to hire more uncertified teachers over the next two years. The newly hired uncertified teachers will be required to pass an alternative certification program over the next two years.

The Texas state government, as with state and local governments across the country controlled by both parties, is engaged in a huge attack on public education. Instead of dedicating more funding for schools, Governor Gregg Abbott has championed a school voucher program. The largest beneficiaries of this are the private and charter schools, whose lobbyists have contributed millions of dollars to the Texas governor's campaigns.

The TEA is the state government agency responsible for overseeing public school districts in Texas. Among its responsibilities are the distribution of state and federal funds to public schools, and administration of standardized achievement tests to students. Schools receive grades of A to F based on the overall performance of students on these tests, the current version of which is known as the STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness).

According to the state's School Accountability law, passed in 2015, if at least one campus receives an F for five consecutive years, the TEA commissioner can either order the school closed or order the entire district to be taken over.

The grades of schools closely mirror the income level of the students. In four school districts that have been recently taken over, six schools with failing grades have students in which over 80 percent of those enrolled are from low-income households, well above the already-high state average of 60 percent.

These state takeovers are used to reduce the quality of public education, not improve it. In 2023, the TEA took over Houston ISD, the state's largest school district, with over 194,000 students. At that time, nearly one third of HISD teachers who taught during the 2023-24 school did not return; the district had a turnover rate about twice as high as the entire state.

These teachers were replaced by uncertified replacements. The year prior to the takeover, HISD had 106 uncertified teachers; in 2023-24, that number was 1,096, and in 2024-25 it was up to 2,122. The takeover also led to an accelerated decrease in public school enrollment. Before the takeover, enrollment was dropping at a rate of one to two percent yearly, accelerating to three to four percent per year afterwards.

According to Steven Poole, executive director of the United Educators Association, other school districts near FWISD have been aggressively recruiting Fort Worth teachers, so clearly the problem is not the quality of the teaching.

Teachers who left the district cited micromanagement of their classrooms and chaotic environments as the reasons they left. For example, new guidelines put in place after the takeover mandated that all desks must face the front of the room, and that all posters had to be removed. Even settings of lights were mandated. One teacher stated, “I’ve been teaching for 17 years. I’ve just never been micromanaged to the degree in which I was suddenly micromanaged.”

Another teacher on the TexasTeachers reddit group:

I am currently a teacher [in] FWISD, and I feel like I have been lied to. The curriculum isn’t aligned to the state standards ... I am required to use, they tell me to change things to get them aligned, but then tell me I can’t change the lessons.

They don’t have a clue what they are doing. I am thinking of just walking away and becoming a server somewhere or something.

The teacher unions have only nominally opposed state takeovers of school districts. The American Federation of Teachers criticized the Houston ISD takeover as a “power grab” that ignored the voices of families and educators, and the Houston Federation of Teachers has filed lawsuits challenging new evaluation systems implemented after the takeover, claiming they were established without proper input from teachers. They have also organized protests against the changes.

But the union bureaucracy is only taking such measures to allow teachers to blow off some steam and give themselves the space to say they are doing “something.” Experience has shown that they are hostile to the interests of their members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Houston Federation of Teachers said nothing while over 100 Houston teachers mounted a wildcat sickout strike against unsafe reopening. The union allowed teachers to get sick and die rather than mobilize its membership.

The union bureaucracy is collaborating with school districts across the country to carry out mass layoffs and school closures, including in Los Angeles, San Francisco

and Chicago. In each of these cases, the school districts announced layoffs almost immediately following ratification of the new contracts, under conditions where these plans were being systematically concealed from workers beforehand.

The Democrats, the self-proclaimed “opposition” to Abbott’s school vouchers, are fielding a gubernatorial candidate who counts among his biggest donors Arthur Rock, who has spent millions on pro-charter causes. In addition to the \$77,000 received from Rock, James Talarico has also received thousands from Charter Schools Now PAC and Legacy 44, another pro-charter school outfit.

The Democrats’ record on education is instructive. The Obama administration saw, up until that point, one of the largest assaults on public education in American history. Biden oversaw an education jobs bloodbath. Democratic mayors and school boards presided over decades of defunding, creating conditions for these takeovers. In Houston, the Democratic Party-dominated school board was mired in corruption—the former COO was caught with \$90,000 in cash from a bribery scheme—and the board ultimately voted to end its own lawsuit against the TEA, facilitating the takeover.

What is needed are not appeals to the powers that be, but for educators to build new organs to mobilize the working class for quality, and fully funded public education as a basic democratic and social right. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees is working to build rank-and-file committees across different industries and throughout the world.

These committees are democratic bodies controlled directly by workers, not by paid union officials. They are not constrained by union contracts, no-strike clauses, or the unions’ subordination to the Democratic Party. They can link teachers’ struggles with those of other workers—parents, school support staff, and other sectors—and can develop a political program that goes beyond defensive battles to pose the question of workers’ power.



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