

During the Fall of 2023, the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (TCNWS) disseminated a survey to school nurses in Texas. School nurses are defined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as “an educator employed to provide full-time nursing and health care services and who meets all the requirements to practice as a registered nurse (RN) pursuant to the Nursing Practice Act and the rules and regulations relating to professional nurse education, licensure, and practice and has been issued a license to practice professional nursing in Texas.”¹ The 2023 Texas School Nurse Workforce Survey was developed to learn more about the school nurse population in Texas following the report created on school nurses based on TEA data.²

The 2023 Texas School Nurse Workforce Survey targeted a total of 8,399 nurses who were listed in the 2022 Board of Nursing licensure file with a practice setting in “school health services.” The survey was distributed via mail and also made available on the TCNWS website. Additionally, it was promoted through various publications and during the Texas School Nurse Organization annual conference. Participants had the option to complete the survey either online via a Qualtrics link, or by mailing in a paper response. The survey covered a range of topics, including licensure, self-reported title, demographics, campus information, job details, workload, job satisfaction, and the impact of COVID-19. A total of 3,825 surveys were completed. After filtering the data based on respondents’ answers to the initial questions—specifically, whether they were school nurses and their job titles—there were responses from 3,337 school nurses.

¹ 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 153.1022 (a) (1) (D).

² 2021 Texas School Nurses in Texas K-12 Public and Charter Schools; <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-center-nursing-workforce-studies/nursing-workforce-reports>

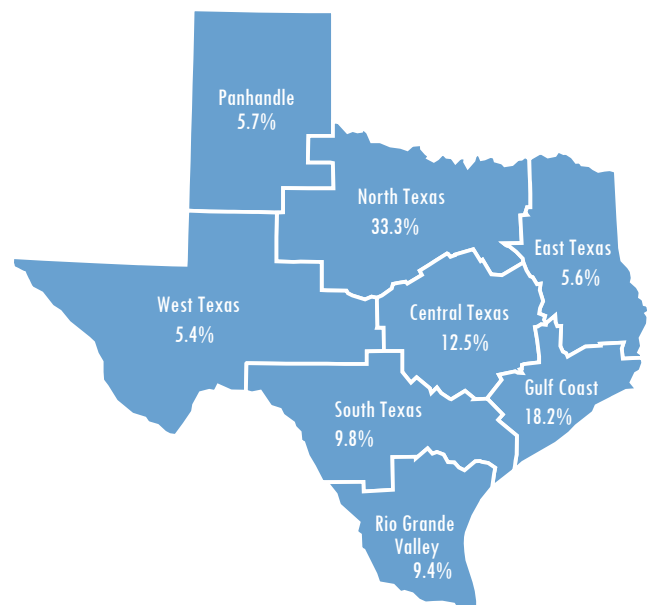
School Nurses Across Texas

3,262 out of 3,337 respondents (97.8%) listed the counties their campus(es) were located. These counties were matched to the Department of State Health Services geographic designation information.

- 216 out of the 254 Texas counties were represented through the survey responses.
- Harris county accounted for nearly 1 out of 10 responses.
- By region, North Texas had the highest proportion of responses (33.3%) followed by the Gulf Coast (18.2%).
- The majority of responses came from metropolitan/non-border counties (77.6%).

Other variables were not analyzed by public health region due to large proportions of responses from one region over all others. Representativeness through geographic and demographic variables is defined in Appendix A. The population survey results are compared to the 2023 BON licensure file and the Texas Education Agency school nurse role data file.

Figure 1. Proportion of Texas School Nurse Respondents across Texas Regions, 2023



Demographics

Nurse Type

The majority of the 2,992 respondents said they had an RN license (82.6%), followed by an LVN license (15.5%), APRN (0.9%), and those who said they are not a nurse (1.0%).

Gender

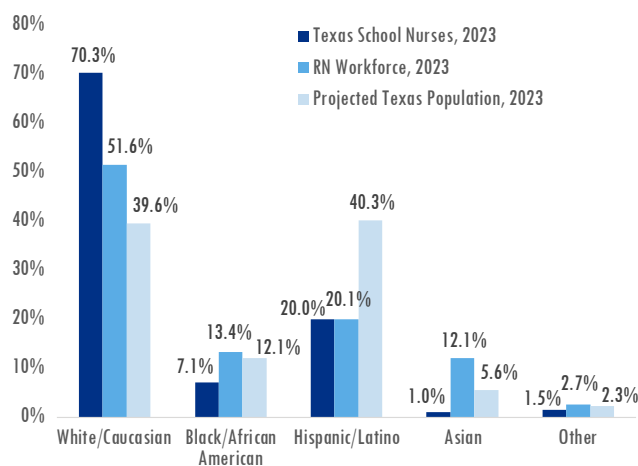
2,933 out of 3,337 respondents answered the gender question. Most respondents (97.9%) were female. This proportion is higher than what is seen in the 2023 RN workforce (87.3%)³ and the 2023 Texas population (50.0%).⁴

Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the race/ethnicity distribution of the 2,913 respondents that answered the race/ethnicity question compared to the RN workforce and the projected Texas population in 2023.

- The majority of responding school nurses identified as White/Caucasian (70.3%). This was higher than the proportion of the RN workforce (51.6%) and the projected Texas population (39.6%).
- The proportion of responding school nurses that identified as Hispanic/Latino (20.0%) closely match the RN workforce proportion (20.1%). However, both proportions fall below the percentage of Hispanic/Latinos in the projected Texas population (40.3%).

Figure 2. Race/ethnicity of School Nurses compared to the RN Workforce and the Projected Texas Population, 2023



³RN workforce data come from the 2023 BON Licensure Renewal file of actively practicing Texas nurses.

⁴Texas population data come from the 2023 Texas Demographic Center population projections (<https://demographics.texas.gov/Projections/>).

- Asian school nurses represented the smallest proportion, with only 1.0% identifying as such. This was significantly lower than the proportion in the RN workforce (12.1%) and the projected Texas population (5.6%).

Age

The survey asked for year of birth which was used to calculate the age of the 3,268 respondents using the year the survey was administered, 2023. The average age of participating school nurses was 50 years, older than the average age of the RN workforce, 44.5 years.

- School nurse ages ranged from 20 to 87 years.
- The majority of participants were 40 to 59 years of age (59.1%).
- Only 2.8% of responding school nurses were under the age of 30. 21.6% were 60 years or older.

Retirement Plans

Respondents who indicated they were 55 years of age or older were asked about their plans for retirement. 1,190 respondents were over the age of 55 and 919 responded to the question.

- The majority said they would retire in 1 to 5 years (59.5%).
- 6.9% said they would retire in less than 1 year.
- 21.7% would retire in 6 to 10 years.
- 4.0% would retire in more than 10 years.
- 7.9% of those 55 and older had no plans to retire.
- Of the 7.9% of those 55 and older who have no plans to retire, the majority said they desired to continue working.

Experience

3,311 respondents provided the number of years of experience they had as a nurse before becoming a school nurse.

- The years of experience ranged from 0 to 51 years.

The mean and median years of experience were 11.5 and 10 years, respectively.



Highest Degree

Figure 3 shows the proportion of highest degrees among the 2,990 school nurses that responded to this question.

- The majority of school nurses said they have a bachelor's degree. Among those with a bachelor's degree, 93.3% held a bachelor's in nursing. The rest held a bachelor's in other field.
- Of those holding less than a bachelor's degree, the majority (66.6%) had an associate's in nursing. The rest held either a high school diploma or a diploma in nursing.
- Of those holding more than a bachelor's degree, 65.8% held a master's in nursing. The rest had either a master's in an other field or a doctorate in nursing.
- "Other" responses included vocational nursing, incomplete college, and associate's in a variety of concentrations.

Nationally Certified School Nurse

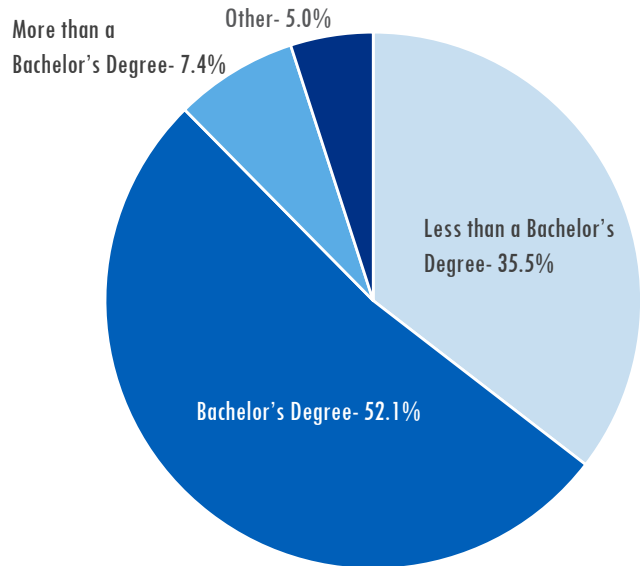
2,772 school nurses responded to whether or not they are a nationally certified school nurse. Only 139, or 5.0%, answered in the affirmative.

Professional Affiliations

2,749 nurses responded to which nursing organization they are a member of.

- 1,311 said they were not a member of any nursing organization.
- 373 said they were a member of the Texas Nurses Association/American Nurses Association.

Figure 3. Highest Degree of School Nurses, 2023



- 1,216 said they were a member of the Texas School Nurses Organization/National Association of School Nurses.
- 95 said they were a member of Texas School Nurse Administrators Association.
- 130 nurses indicated they were a member of an organization other than those listed above. These organizations include: Chi Eta Phi, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, local associations for school nurses, and others.
- 334 school nurses said they were members of more than one of these nursing organizations.

Campus Information

Number of Campuses

Survey respondents were asked the number of campuses they work at and the number of school nurses at their campus(es). The number of campuses ranged from 1 to 280.

- The majority of school nurses (69.1%) only worked at one campus.
- Nurses working at more than one campus most frequently (37.6%) reported working at 2 campuses.
- 67.8% of nurses reported being the only school nurse at their campus.

- Of those school nurses working in metro counties, 18.5% reported working at multiple campuses. In non-metro counties, 46.1% reported working at multiple campuses.

Grade Groups

The survey asked participants to answer which grade group(s) they served. 2,869 out of the 3,337 responded to this question. Table 1 (page 4) shows the breakdown of the percentage of school nurses working at each grade group and those working at more than one grade group.

- 53.1% of responding school nurses serve more than one grade group.



Table 1. School nurse grade groups worked

Grade Group	% school nurses
Pre-K and Elementary	18.9%
Middle	13.6%
High	14.4%
More than one grade group	53.1%

Number of Students Served

Survey participants were queried about the number of students they serve. The student count spanned from 0 to 500,000.

- The median number of students served was 650.
- There were 1,836 school nurses that worked at one campus as the only school nurse. On average, they served 772.7 students.
- School nurses in metro counties working at one campus as the only school nurse served on average, 719.4 students compared to the average in non-metro counties, 466.8.

In the additional comments, 19 respondents emphasized the need for a standardized nurse-to-student ratio to prevent an overwhelming workload.

Reporting Department

Most school nurses (60.4%) report through the Health & Wellness services department, followed by student services (19.4%) and special education (2.3%).

- 17.9% responded with “other” departments, such as working under administration and/or the principal.

Respondents reported who is responsible for their annual evaluation.

- 37.3% reported a non-nurse is responsible, 34.1% reported both a nurse and a non-nurse is responsible, and 28.6% reported a nurse is responsible.

Pressing Issues on Campus

2,311 school nurses listed what, in their opinion, was the most pressing issue for their campus/district in terms of school health.

- The most common themes identified from these answers involved more staff to cover the extensive workload and responsibilities of the school nurse and a greater understanding from parents and administration of the role of the school nurse.
- 20.4% of respondents said their biggest issue in

terms of school health was the lack of parental involvement.

- 16.8% said mental health issues among students, particularly those in junior high and high school was a big issue, listing anxiety and depression concerns.
- 66 school nurses said that vaping and/or other illicit drugs were big problems in their campus/district.

Campus Support Needs

School nurses were asked which areas on their campus(es) could receive more support. Respondents were able to select more than one area. In total, 2,616 school nurses responded.

- Only 5.4% of responding school nurses said that nothing on their campus could receive more support.
- However, 32.7% chose more than three areas that could receive more support on their campus.
- The majority of school nurses (70.2%) said parent education of the role of the school nurse could receive more support.
- 14.0% of respondents chose the “other” options for the area of support. 417 participants wrote in responses. Responses emphasized the need for more nursing and administrative staff (41.0% of the 417) to relieve some of their workload, allow for a lunch break, and increase nurse to student ratios. Communication and campus support were also asked for (12.8% of 417).

Table 2. Areas of support school nurses believe their campus(es) could receive

Areas of Support	% of respondents
Parent education of the role of the school nurse.	70.2%
Identification of students with health needs in the school system.	45.4%
Standardized emergency care plan development for school and school events.	42.7%
Physician support of school nurse role.	35.1%
Further development of skills for hands on nursing care.	34.8%
Standardized Individual Health Plan (IHP) development.	33.0%
Other	14.0%
Ability to measure academic progress of the students served.	12.1%
Nothing on campus could receive more support.	5.4%



Workload & Job Information

Work Activities

Figure 4 describes the average percentage of time 2,934 school nurses spent on different activities of their job.

- 65.2% of responses described spending more than 50% of their work time on clinical care.
- 10.3% of responses described spending more than 50% of their work time on documentation.

Job Satisfaction

Respondents were asked about how satisfied they are with different aspects of their job. 2,811 school nurses responded with their satisfaction. Figure 5 (page 4) shows the complete distribution of responses.

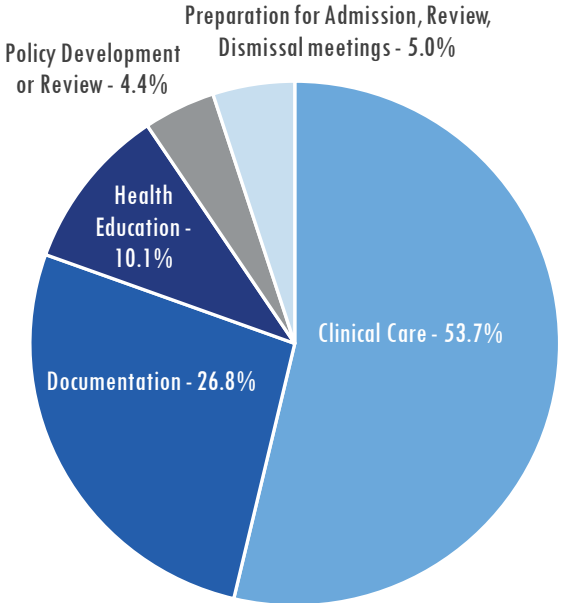
“Satisfied” was the most frequently selected option for:

- overall job satisfaction (50.6%),
- trainings provided by employer (44.2%),
- overall workload (39.6%),
- supervision or feedback (40.2%),
- quality of care they are able to provide (53.3%),
- and their school’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic (38.6%).

31.5% of respondents reported being dissatisfied with their pay.

- There was no difference between regions in their level of satisfaction with pay.

Figure 4. Average percentage of time spent on different work activities

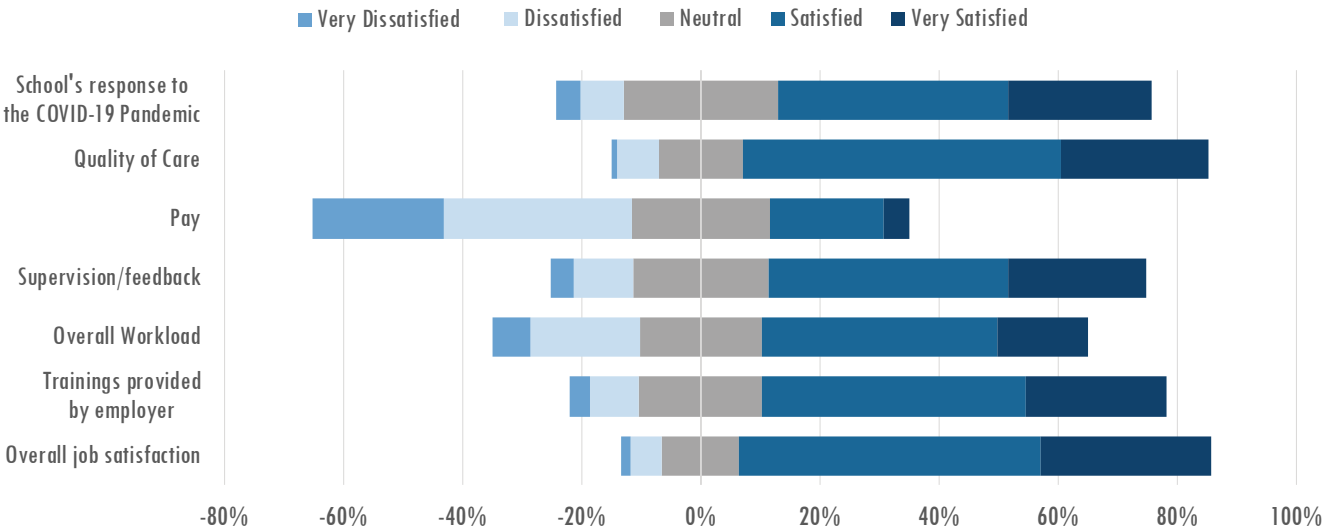


- Respondents from metropolitan areas reported being dissatisfied more frequently than those from non-metropolitan areas.

School nurse salaries was a topic discussed in additional comments. Comments included:

- Increasing salaries to improve school nurse retention (9 responses).
- Paying school nurses as nurses rather than as teachers (68 responses).

Figure 5. Level of satisfaction with different job aspects.



Training Responsibilities

Table 3 shows the trainings that school nurses are responsible for providing to non-nursing staff on their campus(es). There were 2,762 responses to this question.

- Allergies and Anaphylaxis was the most frequently selected training (74.7%) that school nurses were responsible for providing to other staff on campus.
- 298 respondents (10.8%) said they were responsible for providing other trainings including: medication administration (76), Narcan (68), Epi-pen (53), and g-tube feedings (31).
- 8.1% said they were not responsible for providing any trainings to non-nursing staff.
- Notably, mental health first aid was the least selected training, with only 3.3% of respondents indicating they are responsible for it. However, when asked about the most pressing issues on their campus(es), 16.8% indicated that mental health was at the top of the list.

Training

Table 4 shows the commonly completed trainings (2,890 responses to this question):

- CPR certification was the most frequently selected training.
- The second and third most chosen options were “Certified to screen vision, hearing, and spinal by DSHS” and “Stop the Bleed.”
- Only 2 respondents (0.0%) said they have not completed any trainings.

Other Trainings Reported (516 responses to this question):

- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS), Narcan use, Drug Impairment Training for Education Professionals (DITEP), Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI), and trainings related to epilepsy.

Funding for Trainings (2,876 responses to this question):

- Among respondents, 69.6% indicated that all their trainings were funded by the school or district.
- A small percentage (3.6%) reported that no trainings were funded by the school or district.
- Of the 119 school nurses that said their trainings were not funded, over half (52.1%) said they paid for them with personal funds. Only 11.8% said the trainings they had received were freely available.

Table 3. Trainings school nurses are responsible for providing non-nursing staff

Trainings Responsible for Providing	% of respondents
Allergies and anaphylaxis	74.7%
Seizure care	72.7%
Unlicensed Diabetes Care Assistants (UDCA)	69.3%
Inhaler training	61.9%
Automated External Defibrillator (AED)	59.9%
Stop the Bleed	59.8%
CPR	46.2%
Choking	43.8%
Bloodborne Pathogens	33.9%
Other	10.8%
None	8.1%
Child abuse	6.9%
Medical technology	4.7%
Suicide prevention	3.5%
Mental Health First Aid	3.3%

Table 4. Trainings completed by school nurses

Completed Trainings	% of respondents
CPR certification	99.0%
Certified to screen vision, hearing, and spinal by DSHS	94.3%
Stop the Bleed certification	89.4%
Texas Risk Assessment for Type 2 Diabetes in Children (TRAT2DC, also known as AN)	60.2%
Youth mental health first aid (YMHFA)	24.7%
Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE)	23.3%
Drug Impairment and Behavior Recognition for Education Professionals (DIBREP)	22.5%
Helping Administer to the Needs of the student with Diabetes in School (HANDS)	22.4%
School Emergency Triage Training (SETT)	19.4%
Other	17.9%
None	0.0%



COVID-19 Impact

School nurses were asked how they, and their roles as the school nurse, were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 2,466 school nurses responded.

“Working through the pandemic in the school was a very challenging time. There was not a lot of extra time to do the other required tasks (i.e. screenings) because the entire day was spent taking care of reporting covid positive cases, documenting, and testing sick students. Education in other important areas was almost nonexistent during the pandemic.”

- Nurses across the state echoed the sentiment of the quote above. 22.8% said the workload was increased tremendously due to testing and documentation.

- 174 nurses said the pandemic brought added stress. 25 nurses specifically said the pandemic led to “burnout” and an additional 23 said they almost quit their jobs.
- However, 10.4% of the responding school nurses said that the COVID-19 pandemic does not have any impact on their role during this school year. 62 specifically mentioned things have gone back to “normal.”
- Many school nurses also said that the pandemic highlighted the school nurse role showing parents, other school staff, and administration how valuable the school nurse is for the campus and community.

School Nurse Involvement in Policy

Policy

25.7% of respondents reported being involved in policy decisions at their school, 18.3% in their district, 1.0% at the state level, and 0.6% at the national level.

- At the school level, nurses often provide input and focus on health or wellness-related policies.
- School nurses also reported being involved in safety-related policy at the school and district level.
- 2,764 school nurses responded to whether they were involved in their behavioral threat assessment campus team (BTACT). 686, or 24.8%, answered in the affirmative.
- The roles nurses reported playing on the BTACT were defined as: assessment of student/injury/situation, advisory position, committee member, data collector, evaluator, and health professional.

- At the district level, nurses participate with their School Health Advisory Council (SHAC).
- 2,760 school nurses responded to whether they were involved in their district’s SHAC. 894, or 32.4%, answered in the affirmative.
- At the state and national levels, nurses participate through voting and membership in professional groups. Some advocate for policy changes by contacting legislators.
- 2,297 school nurses answered the question about who asks for their input for informing policy decisions.
- 25.7% said that no one asks for their input.
- When consulted, it’s typically by school administrators/principal (32.5%) and nurse supervisors (7.9%).



Limitations

Returned Mailings Were Not Counted:

- The exact number of nurses who received the survey via mail is unknown due to uncounted returned mailings. The reported count of 8,399 nurses represents those who were mailed the survey but may not accurately reflect the actual recipients.

Multiple Distribution Channels and Response Rate:

- The survey link was distributed through various channels, including the website. As a result, the 8,399 mailed surveys do not constitute the total population. Therefore, there is no response rate.

Representativeness Challenge:

- While responses can be compared to the “population reached,” true representativeness is challenging. The school nurse population may be larger than expected due to factors like substitute nurses and retirees with active licenses.

Summary of Responding Texas School Nurses

- 82.6% held an RN license.
- 97.9% were female.
- 70.3% were White/ Caucasian.
- The average age was 50 years.
- Of those older than 55, 59.5% said they would retire in the next 1 to 5 years.
- The average years of experience as a nurse before becoming a school nurse was 11.5 years.
- 52.1% had a Bachelor’s degree.
- 5.0% said they were a nationally certified school nurse.
- 47.7% were not a member of any nursing organization.

Given the data analyzed above, the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies Advisory Committee may make recommendations for research, policy, or organizational action related to school nurses. Below are the recommendations based on the data from the 2023 School Nurse Workforce Survey.

Recommendation 1

- Study and develop ways to recruit more school nurses.
- Identify the needs of the school nursing staff and if adding more school nurses or administrative support would be appropriate.

One of the most pressing issues listed was the need for more staff to cover the extensive workload and responsibilities of the school nurse. This is also highlighted in the large nurse to student ratios, with those reporting only working at one campus and as the only school nurse serving an average of 772.7 students. When discussing ratios of school nurses to students, the population is important to consider. This includes the number of students with daily medical needs, the socioeconomic status of the students, and the number of students that require the nurse to hold medications for emergencies. There were mentions of students and parents coming to the school nurse who did not have access to primary care for their health, further putting strains on the school nurse.

Further, about a quarter of respondents to the 2023 Texas School Nurse Workforce Survey were over 55 years old- within 12 years of full retirement age.

Recommendation 2

- Conduct research into school nurse pay in order to understand what would be a competitive salary, an acceptable pay schedule, and where funding could be found to increase pay for school nurses.

53.4% of school nurses reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their pay. Often, school nurses practice as nurses before joining the school setting. On average, responding school nurses worked 11.5 years as a nurse before becoming a school nurse. Currently, many school nurses are paid on the teacher schedule meaning they get paid for 187 days but the pay is stretched throughout the whole year.

Data collected from the 2023 School Nurse Workforce Survey shows that it would be more beneficial to pay school nurses as nurses rather than teachers. The survey data suggests that a school nurse should be paid for their hours when they work them.

Recommendation 3

- Broaden the understanding of the school nurse role and include school nurses on taskforces and committees where their expertise would be well utilized. This includes taskforces on student mental health, groups to reduce drugs on campus, and even large organizations like the Texas Education Agency.

Nurses are underrepresented in nursing organizations and on boards that could use the school nurse perspective. Only about a quarter (24.8%) of responding school nurses said they were involved in their behavioral threat assessment campus team (BTACT) and only about a third (32.4%) said they participate with their School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). Only a quarter of school nurse respondents reported being involved in policy.

Recommendation 4

- Fund mental health first aid and suicide prevention training. Only 3.3% and 3.5% school nurses said they were responsible for training non-nursing staff in these areas, respectively. Further, only 24.7% of nurses have taken the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training.

One of the most common pressing issues reported by school nurses in this survey was mental health issues among students, particularly those in middle and high school, listing anxiety and depression concerns. The question of concern came in the form of a free response textbox, leading to the belief that more school nurses would have selected mental health as an issue had they been given a list to choose from.

Appendix A

Variables		2023 Texas School Nurse Workforce Survey (n=3,337)	2023 BON licensure file: "School Health Service" (n= 9,255)	2023-2024 TEA School Nurse file (n=7,140)
Regions	Panhandle	5.7%	3.6%	4.5%
	North Texas	33.3%	30.2%	32.0%
	East Texas	5.6%	6.3%	6.3%
	Gulf Coast	18.2%	22.6%	23.4%
	Central Texas	12.5%	11.3%	9.4%
	South Texas	9.8%	10.8%	9.7%
	Rio Grande Valley	9.4%	9.6%	8.4%
	West Texas	5.4%	5.5%	6.2%
Age	mean years	50.0 years	48.2 years	45.2 years
Gender	Female	97.9%	97.9%	98.0%
	Male	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%
Race/ethnicity	White/Caucasian	70.3%	65.3%	63.6%
	Black/African American	7.1%	9.6%	9.6%
	Hispanic/Latino	20.0%	22.3%	23.7%
	Asian	1.0%	1.3%	1.7%
	Other	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%
Highest Degree	Less than a Bachelor's	40.4%	48.1%	33.9%
	Bachelor's	52.1%	47.4%	59.7%
	Master's	7.1%	4.4%	6.2%
	Doctorate	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%

