



Non-Monetary Impacts to K-12 Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Purpose. The purpose of this survey was to collect information from school districts about non-monetary issues that are impacting recruitment and retention efforts across Wyoming. This information was collected at the request of the Joint Education Interim Committee (JEIC).

Participants. All district superintendents were invited to take this survey, which was open from September 15th through the 22nd. Forty-two (42) out of 48 superintendents responded (88%).

Questions. The survey contained the following eight (8) questions:

1. Has your school district experienced issues with hiring and/or retaining staff? (Y/N)
2. What types of staff have been difficult to hire and/or retain? (select all that apply)
 - a. Certified Teachers
 - b. Para-professionals
 - c. Substitute Teachers
 - d. Classified/Support Staff
 - e. Special Education Staff/Providers (i.e., speech, OT, PT, etc.)
 - f. Professional Staff/Providers (i.e., psychologists, counselors, etc.)
 - g. Building Administrators
3. In which school year(s) has your district experienced difficulty in hiring and/or retaining K-12 staff? (select all that apply)
 - a. School Year 2022-2023 (this school year)
 - b. School Year 2021-2022 (last school year)
 - c. School Year 2020-2021
 - d. School Year 2019-2020
 - e. Hiring and/or retaining staff has been difficult for the last five years or more.
4. To what extent is staff pay impacting your district's ability to hire and/or retain K-12 staff?
 - a. Pay has a significant impact on our ability to recruit and/or retain K-12 staff.
 - b. Pay is a factor, but it's not the most significant factor in our ability to recruit and/or retain K-12 staff.
 - c. Pay has a minimal impact on our ability to recruit and/or retain K-12 staff.
5. Which of the following factors impact your district's ability to hire and/or retain K-12 staff? (select all that apply)
 - a. Lack of respect shown toward the profession
 - b. Lack of parental or community support
 - c. Taking on extra work due to staffing shortages
 - d. Increased behavioral disruptions
 - e. Lack of support/resources for staff's mental health and well-being
 - f. Losing staff to other professions
 - g. Bureaucratic hurdles (i.e., data/reporting requirements, content load for teachers, etc.)
 - h. Political tensions
 - i. Other (please specify)
6. Of the items selected in the previous question, which would you identify as the top three factors? (same answer options as #5)
7. In what ways have vacancies impacted students in your district?
8. Is there anything else you'd like the JEIC to know about non-monetary impacts to recruitment and/or retention efforts in your district?

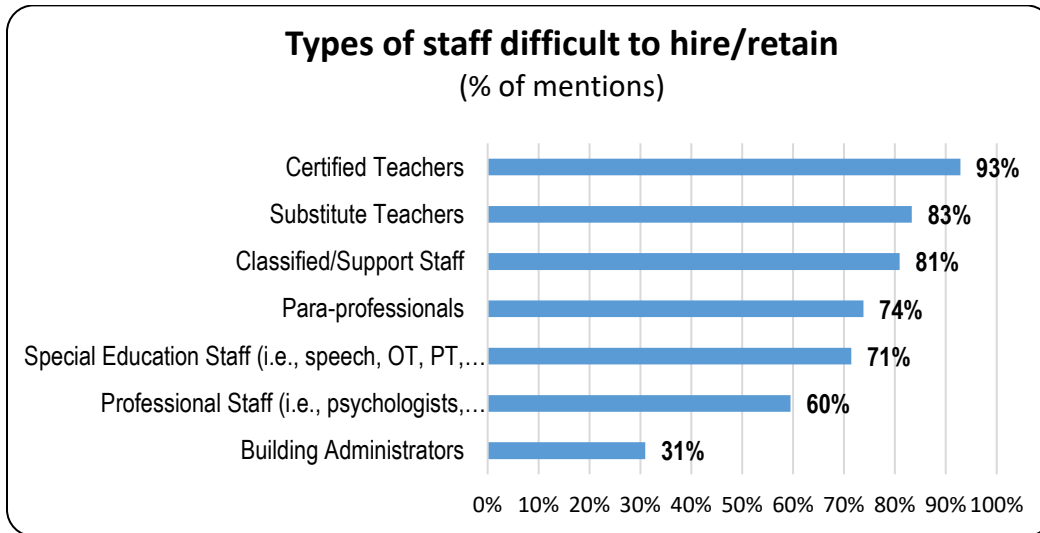
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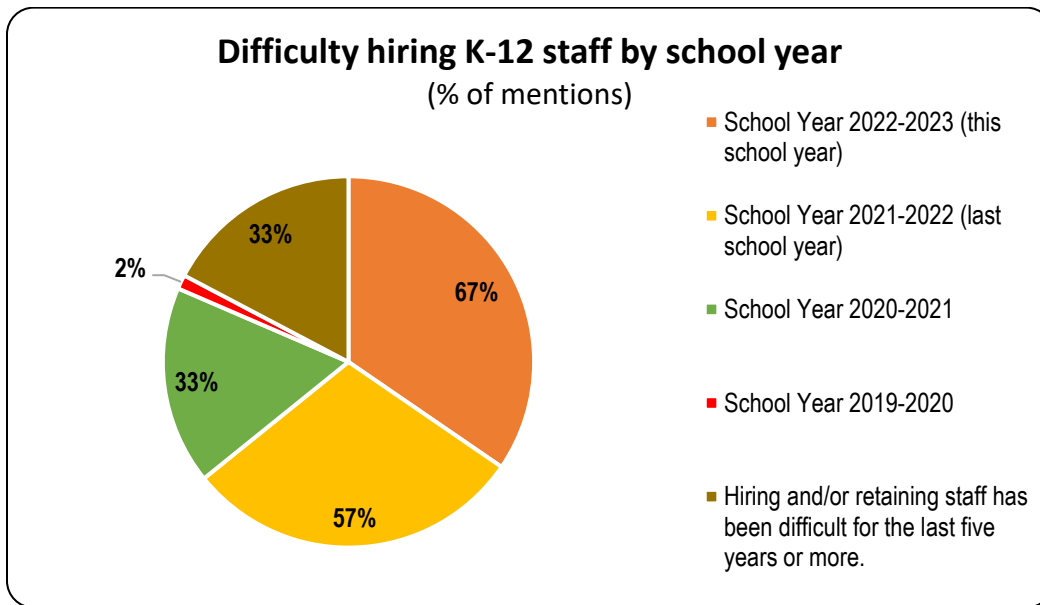
RESULTS

Question 1: 100% of all respondents have experienced issues with hiring and/or retaining staff. Specific details about these challenges are included in Questions two (2) through eight (8) below.

Questions 2 and 3: Most respondents stated that certified and substitute teachers were the most difficult to hire and/or retain in K-12. Additionally, two-thirds of districts indicated that they experienced difficulty hiring K-12 staff for this current school year (2022-23), and over half had difficulty hiring staff last school year (2021-22). Graphs 1 and 2 below illustrate the percentages, respectively, for the type of staff and school years in which districts faced challenging hiring/retention scenarios.



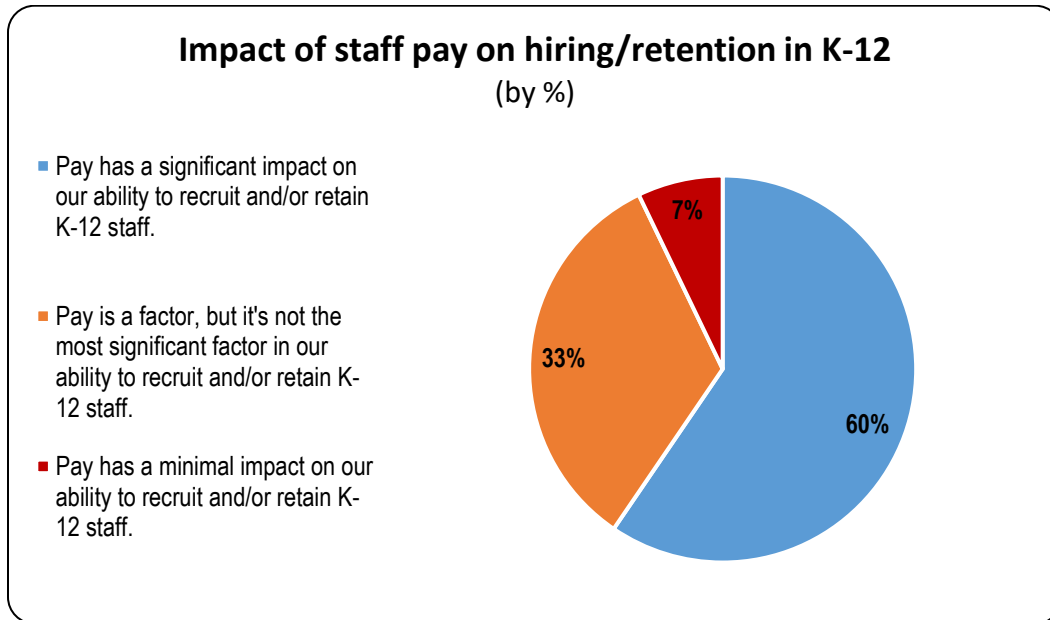
Graph 1. Percent of staff difficult to hire/retain by staff type.



Graph 2. Percent of districts that experienced difficulty hiring K-12 staff by school year.

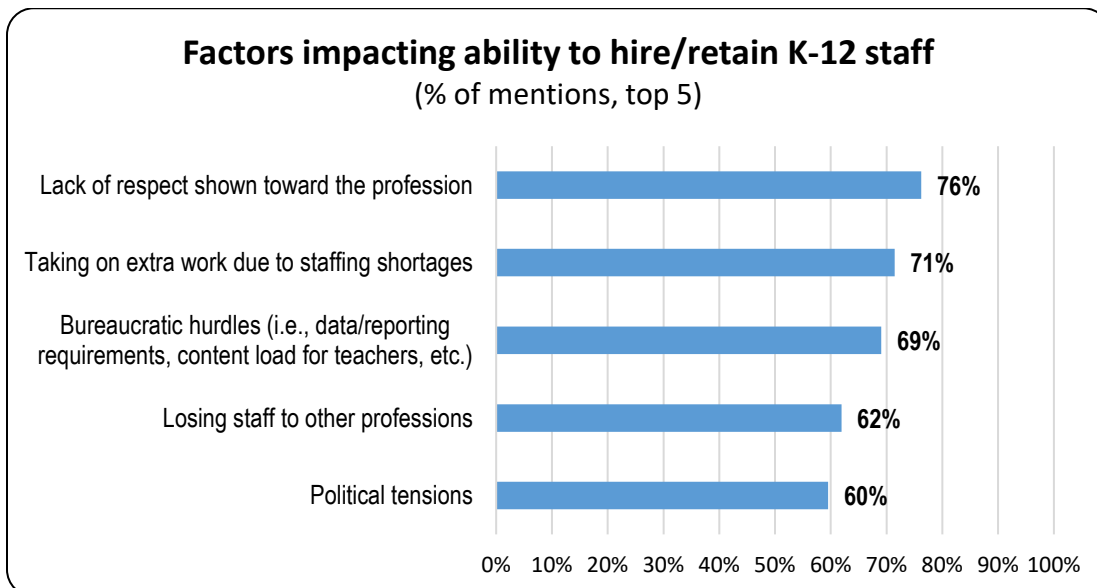


Question 4: Although this survey focused primarily on non-monetary impacts to K-12 recruitment and retention efforts by school districts, 60% of respondents stated that staff pay was a significant factor in their ability to hire/retain staff, as illustrated in Graph 3 below.

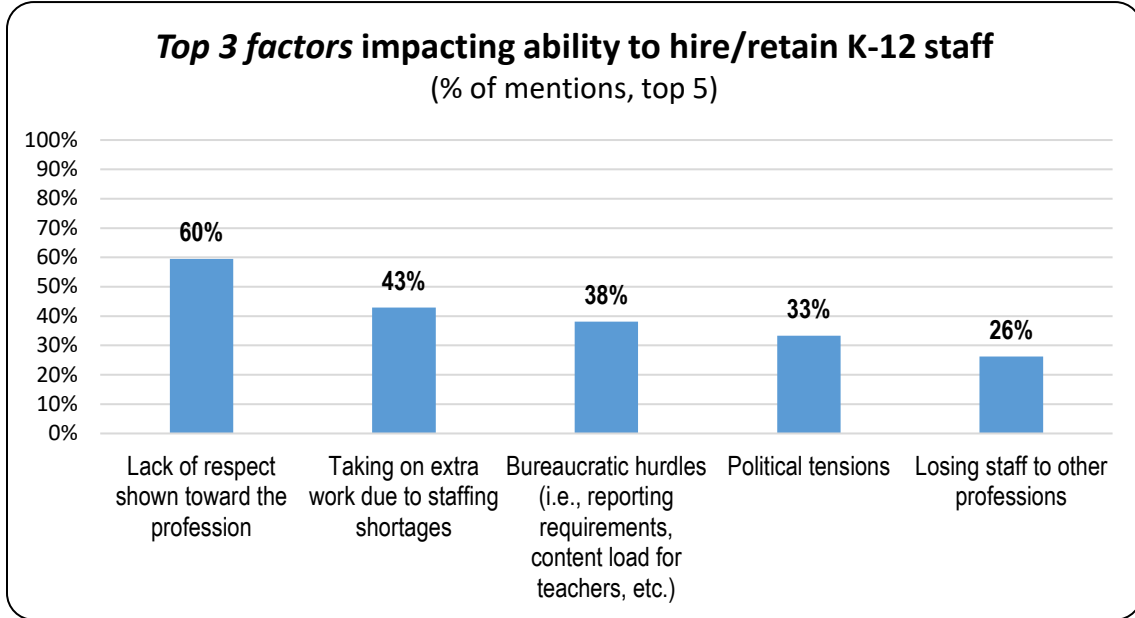


Graph 3. Percentage of districts impacted by ability to pay staff in relation to hiring/retention efforts.

Questions 5 and 6. Districts were asked to identify which factor(s) contributed to the challenges they faced in their efforts to hire and retain staff. Graph 4 contains the top five responses out of the options offered, while Graph 5 illustrates the top five factors that districts identified as their top three challenges (i.e., 60% identified *lack of respect shown toward the profession* as one of the top three barriers to hiring/retaining staff in their school district).



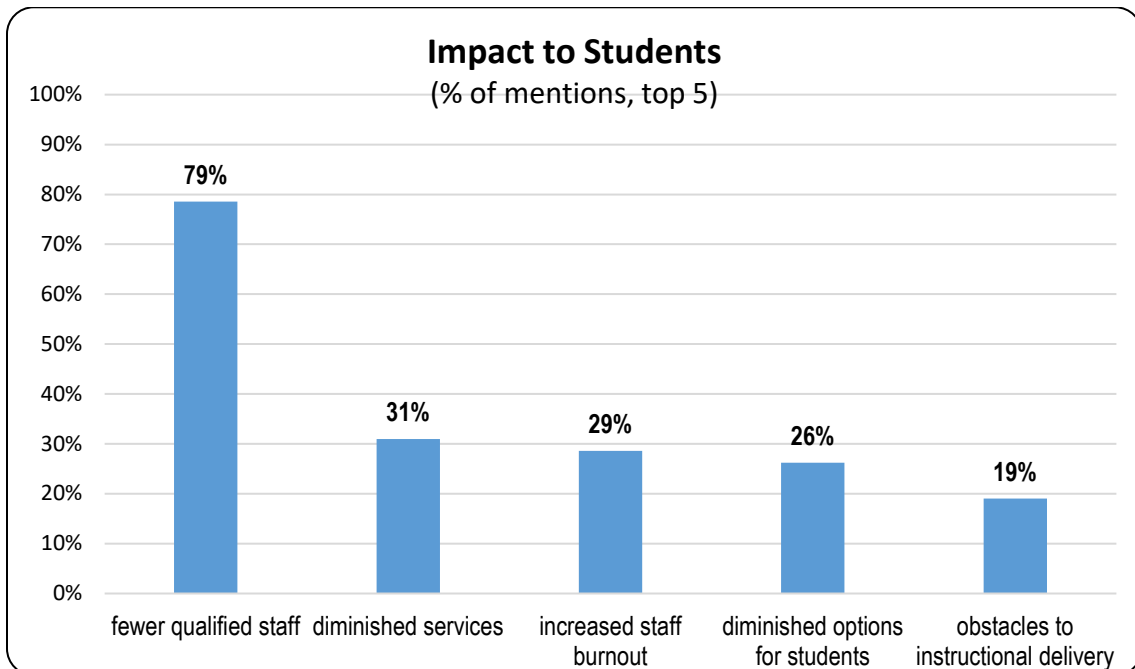
Graph 4. Percentage of mentions for top five (5) factors impacting hiring/retention of K-12 staff.



Graph 5. Top five (5) mentions of top three (3) factors.

Note. Other factors identified in Questions 5 and 6, but not included in the pre-populated options listed in those questions, were *housing* (21%), *remoteness* (14%), *living costs* (10%), and *applicant pool* (7%).

Question 7. Respondents included information about the ways in which the challenges hiring/retaining staff impacted students in their district. The top five (5) impacts are included in Graph 6.



Graph 6. Top five (5) impacts to students.

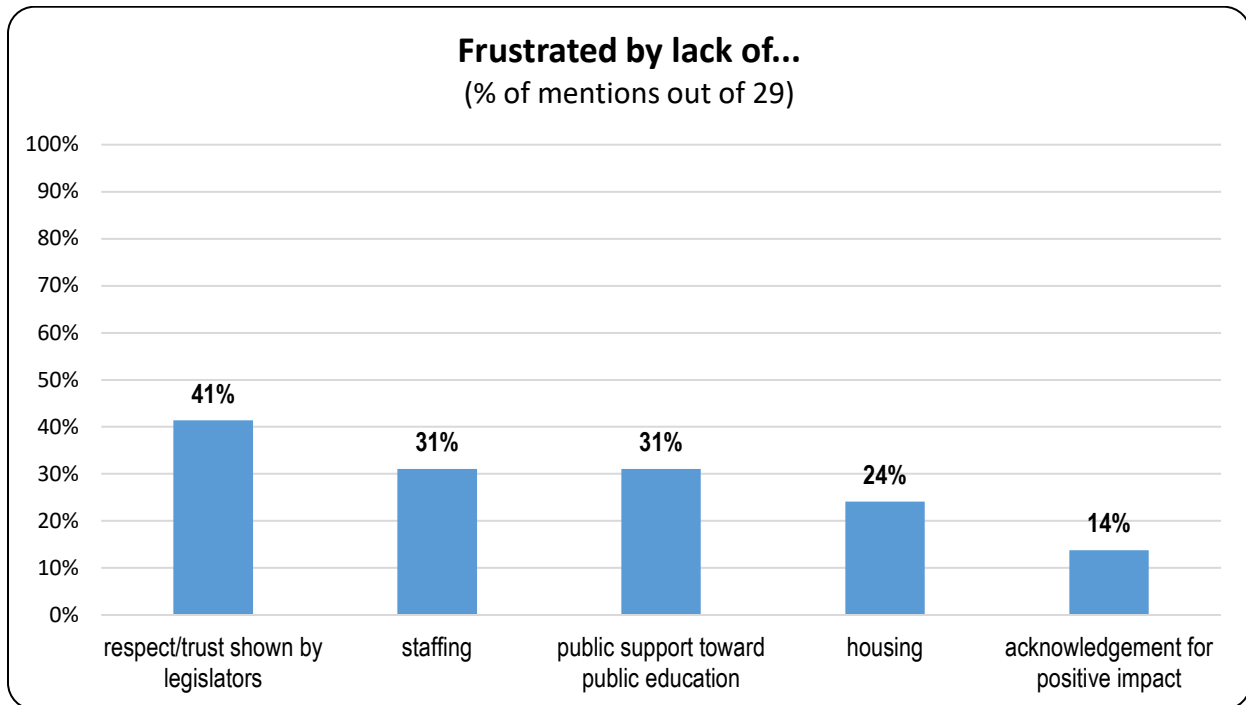


Comments related to student impacts included the following:

- *Students are not getting full services (especially when Special Education is short-staffed).*
- *Teachers taking on extra duties are burning out and this impacts their instruction with students.*
- *We have had few or no choices for some vacancies. That has put us in a position to have to fill vacancies with individuals available rather than candidates who were well qualified or who were strong matches to meet our needs.*
- *Our class sizes in some areas are larger and our teaching staff is more stressed.*
- *Student support and interventions have been heavily impacted (special education, school psychologists, tutors, interventionists) and fewer supports can be provided.*
- *We are seeing very shallow applicant pools, so students are being taught by ineffective teachers. We are hiring the best of the worst in some situations.*
- *We've had to hire long-term substitutes and student teachers to fill some teaching positions leaving students with an inexperienced teacher in the classroom.*
- *Staff have assumed additional duties to help cover openings, and teachers have taken additional students when substitutes couldn't be found.*
- *Extra-curricular offerings are taking a hit.*
- *We have greater turnover so there is a loss of continuity and development from year to year as many of our staff are new each year.*
- *We have had specific program impacted when we have not been able to find a certified teacher and have had to use long term subs.*
- *Some classrooms are taught by long-term substitutes. Some classes have to be combined which results in a larger class size. Both have a potentially negative impact to students.*
- *We are burning people out because we are asking more of current staff to limit the impact on students because of vacancies or the quality of new hires.*
- *Some roles not being filled mean that others need to fill in and provide services (especially in special education needs).*
- *We are experiencing a loss of programs.*
- *We are putting added stress on teachers by asking them to fill in as bus drivers, lunch workers, and then helping at extracurricular activities.*
- *As a result of fewer high quality applicants, we are not able to provide quality instruction and support to all of our students.*
- *We struggle each day to have the system function properly due to vacancies in all positions throughout the District. Staffing is so bare bones that student programs, instruction, transportation, nutrition services, special services, extracurricular activities, and support services are cut or only offered on a limited basis.*
- *The students are impacted because we struggle to ensure we have the best individuals serving them.*
- *Shortages in classified staff have resulted in decreased transportation services for our students and their families.*

Other impacts to students not identified in the top five (5) included *higher staff-to-student ratios (14%), higher turnover rates/lack of consistency in staffing (10%), higher discipline issues (5%), and scheduling challenges (5%).*

Question 8. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to provide additional comments to the JEIC about the challenges they are facing in their districts. Out of the 42 respondents, 29 (69%) opted to share their thoughts about the most frustrating barriers to hiring/retaining K-12 staff. Graph 7 contains a summary of their responses.



Graph 7. Percentages of additional factors impacting hiring/retention efforts for K-12 staff.

Comments shared by the respondents to the JEIC included the following:

- *The pool of applicants has decreased drastically. We spend much more time trying to find applicants just to apply than ever before.*
- *The negativism of the legislature (as a body, certainly not every legislator) towards education is, quite frankly, astonishing. I would think they would be proud of what they have been a partner in creating and that they would be proud of the work being done with our kids around the state.*
- *Wyoming is creating a climate and culture that is hostile to public education.*
- *Our application pools have dwindled to almost nothing in the last 10 years. If we are not going to address the problem through monetary means, then we need to address the negativity displayed towards educators.*
- *The lack of trust shown by our state legislatures wears on staff.*
- *Staff took on additional work to do whatever they could to help students learn during the pandemic. The increased load and intense desire to do well by their students has created burnout beyond the norm.*
- *Trying to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff is a priority -- this means retaining quality staff is essential in consistency for supporting students and families.*
- *Teachers are busy; there is a lot on their plate, and the increase in social emotional needs of students is taxing as well.*
- *When I talk to students in my district about career plans and encourage them to think about education, I get an increasingly negative response. They see the behavior and lack of respect from students, they see the things written by parents in social media about schools and staff. They see the negative narrative, and they just don't want any part of it.*
- *We need to start recognizing how hard our teacher work and what districts are doing to make Wyoming a great place for students to get an education.*
- *Housing availability and the cost of housing is a growing concern.*
- *It is important for our elected officials to say positive statements about education and educators.*



- *Some legislators are strong advocates, which we appreciate, many others are very disrespectful of teachers, administrators, and our Wyoming public schools.*
- *Housing a real issue. We lost a number of candidates before and after they interviewed due to a lack of housing in our community.*
- *Teachers and school staff needed to be treated like professional and supported in and out of the school setting.*
- *Lack of respect towards educators and the profession as a whole continues to deprive students of equitable and quality instruction. To focus solely on non-monetary impacts is unreasonable. The school foundation model needs funded appropriately. When vacancies have crippled the system, facilities need repaired or replaced, and school safety and security demands continue to rise, non-monetary impacts cannot be looked at singularly.*
- *The constant disrespect from the state legislators and political issues are divisive and disruptive. We need the legislature to endorse and support public education. If there are concerns, ask constituents to bring that to our attention rather than blasting school districts with constant negativity and reprisal undeserved.*
- *The high quality of K-12 education provided in Wyoming has been publicly misrepresented and improperly scrutinized by some. This misrepresentation and unwarranted scrutiny negatively impact staff morale and is a contributing reason why some are leaving the profession and why less college students are seeking careers in education.*
- *When our state's own legislature, our states elected leaders show zero respect, confidence, or support for educators it causes serious issues.*
- *Please be a CHAMPION FOR EDUCATION in Wyoming. The lack of trust in local districts that is communicated by legislators is damaging to us. This brings about an overall lack of trust and creates an obstruction to the local district building relationships because we have to devote energies to being on the defensive when there really is no need.*
- *The political infighting and hate for educators is clear and is directly contributing to college students in Wyoming choosing other career fields or leaving the state to work in other states that value educators.*
- *Increasing state and federal policies, statutes, mandates, initiatives, and oversight divert time, attention, and resources away from ensuring student success. The demands are becoming more and more cumbersome for teachers and administrators. It would be great if we would use the available data to assist those coming up short while not increasing demands on everyone else.*
- *The Wyoming legislature, as a whole, continues to increase oversight from Cheyenne clearly not trusting local school Boards to do the jobs they were elected to do.*
- *While our schools are not engaged in the divisive policies and instruction that may be occurring in other places, we are constantly being accused and having to defend our work. It is exhausting.*