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Why Texas school districts are losing superintendents faster than ever

Mirroring trends across the state and country, leaders of school districts are leaving their posts at high rates.

By Noah Alcala Bach,*Staff Writer*April 27, 2026

Budget constraints, a shortage of high-quality teachers, school board turmoil and the demands of the job are accelerating turnover among school district leaders locally and across the state.

In San Antonio, three superintendents in the city's four largest school systems have been forced out or have announced plans to retire or resign this school year alone.

In the Austin area, Bastrop and Leander Independent School Districts have announced new leaders this school year. Austin ISD's superintendent has already outlasted many urban peers, even though he has held the job permanently since 2024.

"This is absolutely a statewide phenomenon. This is not a local situation at all. And it's not unique to Central Texas," said Brian Woods, the former superintendent of San Antonio's largest district. "I think there are ... a number of factors contributing to it."

In Texas, school funding depends on enrollment, attendance and local property values. Many districts have faced financial strain in recent years as birth rates fall and charter schools draw students away.

Woods, who led Northside ISD for more than a decade, said a "lack of support from state leadership in Texas" to raise more money for traditional public schools has made the job harder and helped drive turnover.

Northside stretches from San Antonio's far West Side into Bexar County's north-central area. It serves students in urban, suburban and semirural communities. Like the areas it serves, the district's demographics closely mirror the state in both ethnicity and income.

"You saw virtually no turnover in 2020 and early 2021," Woods said. "Folks were staying in place just to try to get their districts through it, and so I think that's part of it. But then you'll remember, it didn't take long after the pandemic got kicked off, that schools became a

real…point of contention around all of the kind of social issues that the pandemic brought up."

The job, he said, has become harder.

"I was about 55 or so, and there's a real calculus in your mind about, 'is the toll that this is taking worth staying around'" said Woods, who retired in 2023. "And I had opportunities to go do other things that were interesting to me, but perhaps not 70 or 80 hours a week, and that was enticing too."

He also pointed to post-pandemic politics as another reason for increased turnover. Often, the superintendent is the only employee a school board can hire or fire. A study by the Council of the Great City Schools found that the average tenure of superintendents is about 2.7 years post-pandemic.

"The pandemic conditions were unique, they were unique to the superintendency, just as they were unique to the nation," said Ray Hart, executive director of the organization. "I think coming out of that were a lot of superintendents who wanted to guide their districts through that process. But once we got through the pandemic, we saw a number of them taking opportunities to retire or step away."

Hart said board politics in many of the districts in his organization's study may not have changed much since the pandemic, but have "always been a dynamic." Instead, the scrutiny large urban districts face can add pressure for the school systems' top job.

"One of the major challenges in our districts is that the role is unique," Hart said. "State education agencies tend to pay greater attention to the larger urban districts in the state than they do to kind of some of the smaller districts. So the political pressure, the politics of the role, are very different in large urban districts than they are in other districts across the state."

RAND, a nonprofit research organization, surveys superintendents across the country annually and has found that budget constraints have remained a major source of stress since the pandemic.

"In general, district budget is a concern for all superintendents, and we saw almost no change between 2024 and 2025," said Anna Shapiro, an education researcher for RAND.

She said superintendents also reported they would rather spend more time focusing on "setting policy about schools and instruction" than dealing with board politics, lawmakers and news outlets.

“The amount of time that they’re spending on those kind of external relations,” Shapiro said. “They’re spending a lot of time on that, and they really think that they should be spending time on these more kind of education policy-related activities.”