

Use the words from the box to complete the opinions below:

gauge a pittance allotted fall short of in droves irreparable a fighting chance
have their hands full bursting at the seams irreparable dumbing down

1. Teachers' Low Pay

Unfortunately, most teachers' income in public schools still leaves much to be desired. That's why young specialists **balk at** joining the state sector where the pay is _____ and the work schedule is **grueling** and those with their dignity still intact just leave _____. And the things are **going downhill**.

2. The Unified State Exam

The Unified State Exam remains **a bone of contention** for many educators. Defenders of the USE say that it helps _____ intellectual aptitude in an unbiased, consistent manner, and can help universities fairly compare students from across the country. But critics of the USE and other standardized tests **take issue with** that and argue that they **hamper** imagination, creativity, and other qualities of well-rounded students, and may be biased in favor of students who are not necessarily smarter, but more comfortable with empirical testing methods.

3. Funding

Schools are **grappling with** insufficient funding. As school budgets reach breaking point, there are inevitable consequences for the quality of education being provided to young people, as well as the working conditions of school staff. On a daily basis, this means larger class sizes, reduced access to student support services, cuts in extra-curricular activities and facilities that _____ the standards required. Less money should be _____ to middle management and red-tape projects.

4. The Use of Smartphones

As a teacher, I am thrilled that the UN has called for a ban on mobile phones in schools (26 July 2023). This is long overdue. From my observations, the advance of smartphones has advanced the _____ of pupils and can have _____ consequences. I believe that smartphones should be regarded as potentially as destabilizing as cars or alcohol, and should only be legally available to anyone over a certain age (16 or 18 perhaps). It must be possible to make a phone that functions only as a phone, which children all ages can have, in order to be in safe contact with their parents/carers.

5. Homework Overload

Hefty homework, a daily headache for kids and parents, **is par for the course** in many schools. Poor students really do _____ these days with so much work piled on them. Assignments done at home are sapping more and more of free time, so that children have _____ of squeezing in some time for outside activities, sports, or just relaxing. Research showed that excessive homework is associated with high stress levels, headaches, exhaustion, sleep deprivation, weight loss and stomach problems.

6. Overcrowded classes

Having a classroom _____ does nobody any favours. The excessive number of students in each class creates an environment where effective learning and individualized attention is challenging. The consequences of overcrowded classrooms run deeper than too many students in one class. It includes the strain it places on teachers, the limited access to resources and support for students, and the resulting decline in attendance and motivation.