

Education Matters

October 2011

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation



The Big Shift

Changing Demographics in the Teaching Profession

By Alexandra Schroek

As reformers and legislators debate changes in curriculum and policy, it is important to note that the very face of the teaching profession is changing rapidly. From demographics and paths to certification to attitudes and opinions, our teacher work force in 2011 is extremely different than a mere generation ago.

It's a known and daunting fact that in the next ten years, half of our teacher work force will be retiring. A profession once reserved almost exclusively for female graduates of traditional colleges of education is shifting toward a melting pot of millennials and seasoned professionals from all walks of life and academic backgrounds.

According to a recent survey issued by the National Center for Education Information, programs that offer nontraditional paths toward a career in teaching, otherwise known as "alternative certification," are on the rise nationwide. In a climate where education advocates are calling for a new and highly effective teacher work force, the prospect of attracting professionals with

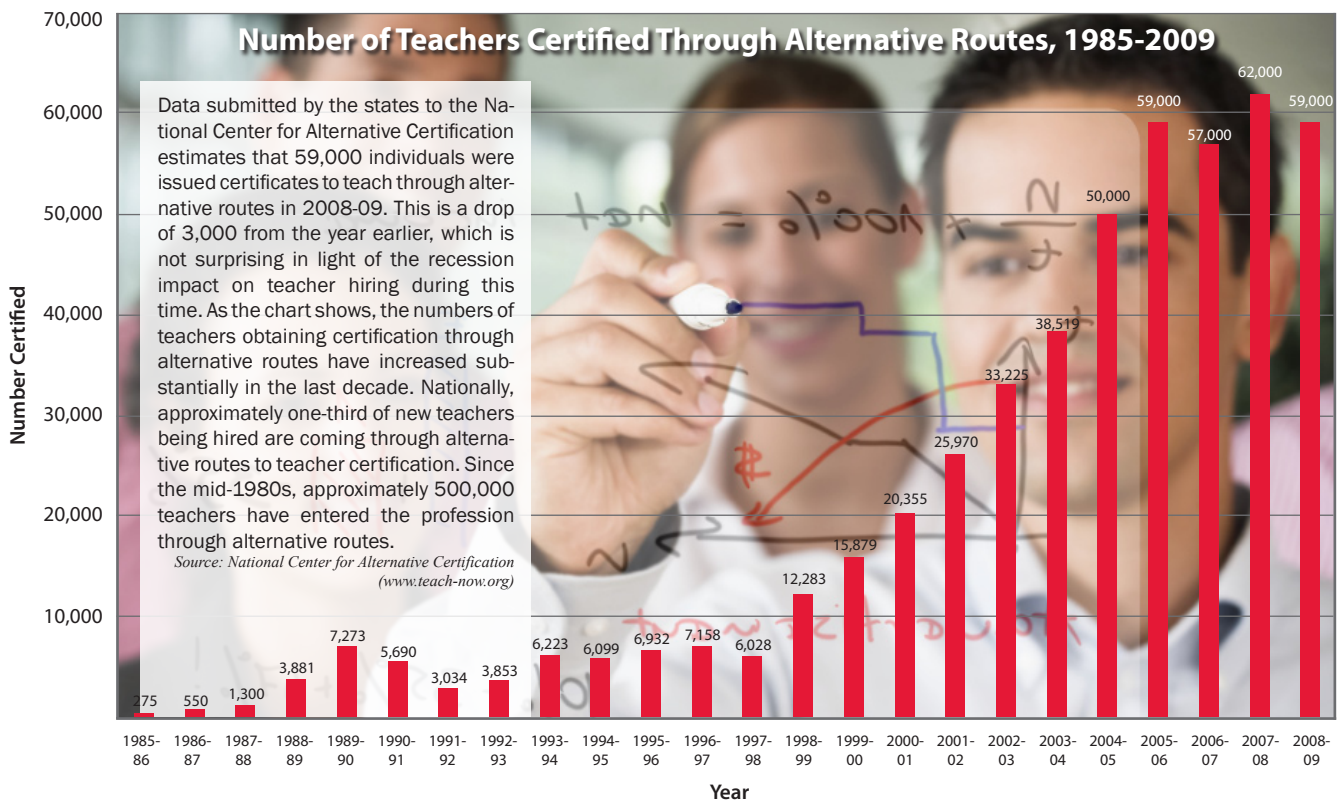
specialized backgrounds is encouraging when filling high-need subject areas like science and math.

Among the survey results, four out of ten new public school teachers hired since 2005 came through alternative teacher-preparation programs. That's up from 22 percent of new teachers hired between 2000 and 2004. The growth alone suggests that professionals from other disciplines are taking advantage of these programs to switch careers, as opposed to going through traditional colleges of education.

A Shift in Attitude

With this new crop of professionals entering the work force, a shift in attitudes and tones is almost certain. According to studies, younger teachers, and those coming from alternative certification programs, are more likely to embrace reforms, such as performance pay and the elimination of tenure, than their traditionally trained counterparts.

In conjunction with an openness to accountability and perfor-



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performance-based incentives, the next generations of teachers are more inclined to embrace technology and cutting-edge teaching techniques. From iPhones to Edmodo, teachers fresh out of college are more likely to reach out to students in cyberspace and meet them where they congregate.

However, the news relating to demographics is not all positive. The data suggests that with a younger generation of teachers, comes a less prepared and inexperienced work force. The proportion of teachers younger than age 30

doubled in the last five years while the percentage of teachers aged 50 and older dropped eleven percent since 2005. Clearly, as our teacher work force retires, districts are seeing rises in younger teachers from less traditional certification paths.

While teacher quality advocates are searching for ways to diversify the profession, gender stereotypes still ring true despite recent shifts in certification and age. According to recent reports, 84 percent of public school teachers are female, up slightly from 2005. White teachers are still the majority with 84 percent. However, the figure is down from a staggering 91 percent in 1986.

New Realities

Political climates are changing the teacher landscape as well. In the wake of budget shortfalls nationwide, fiscally conscious

governors are slashing deficits and instituting broad labor reforms. It was reported that in the wake of Wisconsin's budget repair bill, many older teachers chose not to return this school year and to retire before a new system was implemented. Clearly, thirty-year veterans are often less inclined to embrace new policies and budget realities.

Overall, the changes in the teacher work force are, for the most part, encouraging and reflect positive advancements in the profession. In regard to alternative certification, these innovative programs provide an easier path to the classroom for experienced professionals who bring their unique training and work experience to today's students. Imagine a journalism class taught by a former reporter, or a science class taught by a retired chemist. The possibilities for a rich network of experience are endless with intense alternative training programs.

While no one can predict exactly what the educator work force will look like in coming years, it is clear that we are moving in a direction that will diversify the teaching profession for the better. From gender and racial variation, to experience and training advancements, the new face of the profession will encompass generations both young and old eager to meet tomorrow's challenges. ■



Alexandra Schroeck is AAE's Manager of Communications and Legislative Affairs. She has served in a communications capacity for a Washington, D.C.-based trade association and on Capitol Hill for the then ranking member of the House Congressional Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Finding Your PLACE in AAE

Promoting Leadership
Advancing Connections
Educating

By Paula Jackson-Eaglin

Now that the school year is well underway, AAE educators across the nation are actively engaged in the business of inspiring students. Our members make a difference every day in the lives of learners. Too often, however, educators can feel isolated or alone in their endeavors. We get lost inside the four walls of the classroom and fail to realize we are a part of something so much bigger. AAE is *your* organization, your place to belong, to lead, to connect, and to educate others.

As you read on, you'll find some ideas on how to do just that. The great thing is, you can become involved in whatever way and at whatever level you feel comfortable. At AAE, there are no mandatory meetings, no one-size-fits-all models. We are a dynamic, fluid, growing organization, a place to inspire and be inspired.

As you know, AAE is committed to advancing the profession through personal growth, professional development, and teacher advocacy and protection. We promote excellence in education so our members receive the respect, recognition, and reward they deserve. So ask yourself, "Where do I fit in to that mission?" This article is about helping you find your PLACE in AAE.

Promoting Leadership

Leaders in our organization engage in a variety of activities at the local, regional, state, and national levels. See which of the following leadership activities inspires you and contact us to get started:

- Agree to serve as a local contact for other members in your area, or for potential members who have questions about AAE
- Set up tables at back-to-school events, opening days, or new teacher orientations
- Represent AAE by serving on educator



panels and/or focus groups to help lawmakers and leaders develop educational policies

- Offer testimony before legislative committees
- Write op-eds for local newspapers.
- Participate in radio/television interviews
- Share a testimonial about AAE in writing or in a video
- Promote our scholarship/grant program or volunteer to help evaluate applications

Advancing Connections

One of the benefits of membership in our professional organization is connecting with others. Here are some ways to connect. Let us know if you want to volunteer to help us build and inspire more connections.

- Become a fan of AAETeachers on Facebook
- Follow AAETeachers on Twitter
- Watch AAETeachers videos on YouTube
- Subscribe to the AAE blog via our RSS feed
- Connect with other members by volunteering to assist with scholarship/grant presentations in your area
- Help AAE connect with other community organizations
- Blog about us, and share your story
- Help us plan networking or other events in your area
- Volunteer to serve as a mentor for new AAE teacher members
- Represent AAE at content area conferences in your area to connect with other professionals
- Get to know other AAE members in your area and keep us informed of their accomplishments

Educating

Most of our members are active classroom teachers, and even those who have left the classroom are still teachers at heart. Good teachers teach, but great teachers inspire. Educating and inspiring others is part of our nature and we can learn much from one another. Here are some ideas.

- Have you done action research? Write an article for our newsletter about your work.
- Are you an expert or master teacher in a specific area? Help us design a professional development workshop or training or share your resources.
- Do you have great ideas for classroom management or activities to build a great school culture? Share them for our blog. Other members could use and benefit from your ideas!
- Is your school/district implementing a cutting-edge strategy? Tell us how it's going.
- Are you a virtual educator? Put together a description of your program for us to share.
- Do you have a heartwarming, chicken soup-type story to touch our hearts? Send it to us.

We sincerely hope that you will become more involved with your professional organization. We also understand that inspired teaching is a full-time job, and if your PLACE in AAE is simply to belong we celebrate you as well. ■

If you have ideas or other suggestions to Promote Leadership, Advance Connections, or Educate, please contact paula@aaeteachers.org.



Paula Jackson-Eaglin is National Membership Director for the Association of American Educators. In this role, Paula travels all over the country speaking with policy makers, administrators, and teachers about the nonunion option. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and veteran educator.

Protecting Your Career

Teacher Liabilities and Tips for Staying Out of Legal Trouble

By Sharon Nelson



A year ago, Sean Lanigan was a well-liked elementary school gym teacher living in northern Virginia. Sean taught at the suburban school in his close-knit community for more than thirteen years, where he also coached a high school boys soccer team and various club teams in the area. He had received accolades and rave reviews from students and community members for over a decade. All that changed when he was falsely accused of sexual misconduct by a student looking for revenge after he had disciplined her.

After giving a verbal warning to a 12-year-old girl for misbehaving on a school bus, the girl reportedly told her friends, “Mr. Lanigan’s a jerk,” and “I’m going to make him pay,” according to court records. Days later she accused Sean of sexual advances. The chaos that ensued nearly ruined Sean’s career and life.

When Lanigan’s administrator found out about the accusations, the teacher was pulled out of class, brought to the principal’s office, and subsequently interrogated for two hours. For the first half hour, however, he wasn’t even aware as to why he was there. In the days following, he was charged with abduction and aggravated sexual battery, felony charges yielding a sentence of up to forty years.

With his community behind him, Sean Lanigan was eventually exonerated and his accuser admitted that she had been lying to authorities. While prison is no longer a threat, Sean is now facing an uphill battle over astronomical legal bills despite his innocence.

All Too Common

This type of story is more common than you think. In today’s litigious society you can never be too careful. No matter how isolated you think you may be from harm, or how close-knit your community may be, misunderstandings, accusations, and accidents can occur when working with someone else’s children.

While innocent victims like Sean Lanigan try to pick up the pieces of their lives and deal with enormous debt due to legal fees, teachers need to see this story as a lesson and obtain a quality individual liability insurance policy to protect their career and livelihood. Membership in a professional association, like the Association of American Educators, provides both individual liability insurance and legal protection to all teachers. In a world where everyone insures their car and home, why would a professional not insure his career? Losing certification or having a tarnished reputation can be a game changer for an educator left unprotected.

Other professionals, such as medical doctors, would not dream of practicing without liability (or malpractice) insurance. In today’s world, a teacher should not step into a classroom without a liability policy covering him personally.

Personal Coverage

Many teachers believe that because of a school’s insurance policy, you yourself will be covered. The fact is, your school district liability insurance policy is written in the name of the school district or individual school, which means it covers the district and school, not you. In certain situations your district or at-large school plan will not cover you, your attorney’s fees, or the act that triggers a lawsuit. The school’s policy must protect the school first and foremost. For these reasons it is extremely prudent to have your own insurance policy naming you as the insured party, and personal coverage is key.

As noted on AAE’s website, member teachers have gone through everything from being held liable for student injuries during gym class and fieldtrips to false sexual misconduct accusations. Happily, because of their membership in AAE, they had the security coverage provides and avoided losing their careers and financial livelihood.

Access to Legal Council

One of the most critical aspects of the legal and liability benefits provided by nonunion associations is their guaranteed access to legal counsel. Unlike the union with a bloated bureaucracy and committee system, AAE members are given access to an attorney at the onset of workplace issues. Teachers who are called into a meeting with an administrator, or have been threatened with disciplinary action, can rest assured that they have someone in their corner to speak to regarding their legal rights and options. Members are able to consult with an attorney if they are threatened with termination, suspension, reassignment, or demotion. While no organization can protect from criminal behavior or blatant misconduct, well-meaning teachers deserve to understand their options.

Teachers are threatened everyday and the number of lawsuits filed each year grows exponentially. With technology moving at a breakneck pace, teachers are communicating and interacting with students on and off school property. In reality, with increased interaction comes the increase of potential accusations of misconduct.

A recent report found that more than half of Tennessee teachers who lost their teaching licenses last year were revoked for

inappropriate relationships with students, mostly through text messages. As an attorney for the Tennessee Board of Education points out, "Technology is making it easier to engage in inappropriate communication with

students, and fewer educators are deliberate about how they conduct themselves because it's easier to say something in a text message than in person."

Well-meaning teachers who see no harm in giving out their cell phone number can often be caught in the crossfire. While it is important to read and understand your specific school's policy about contacting students, it is critical to protect your career with legal and liability coverage. Don't let yourself become a victim of false accusations. ■

Note: Limits and restrictions apply on all insurance policies. Before joining an association or purchasing a policy, review all aspects carefully.



Sharon Nelson is the director of legal services for the Association of American Educators. The primary focus of Ms. Nelson's fifteen years of legal experience involves labor/employment law. Ms. Nelson has experience in state court proceedings including administrative hearings for SIIS and unemployment compensation, and has litigated numerous cases in both state and federal court.

"Technology is making it easier to engage in inappropriate communication with students."



Letter to the Editor

Parental Engagement is Key

Dear AAE:

I have been reading the articles in *Education Matters* for the last several months, and every time I finish an edition, I walk away frustrated. I continue to read articles about how to fix the education problems, but I have yet to see an article about what I experience daily in my school — the impact of parent involvement on education. So I am writing to you to draw your attention to a hidden element that no one wants to admit.

I am starting my 7th year of teaching at a high school in a small city that is likely classified as semiurban, high poverty. Certainly we have our share of poor teachers and the other issues described in the *Education Matters* articles. But there is another end to the equation — home life. The August 2011 article "Creating New Paths, Attracting New Teachers" hardly seems to be a solution to our school's challenges.

From what I have observed in my school, the students' work ethic and home life are at the root of their poor education performance. Often times, teachers are carving out time in their classes to allow students to complete their homework because they are not completing it at home. If the teacher gives the student an extended time to complete the homework, then we are reinforcing the lack of consequences for children acting responsibly. Are we then sending students into the work force thinking they don't have to get their assignments done on the job until they want to? I have seen teachers expend a LOT of energy just to get students to hand in assignments. That does not sound like a teacher failing to teach.

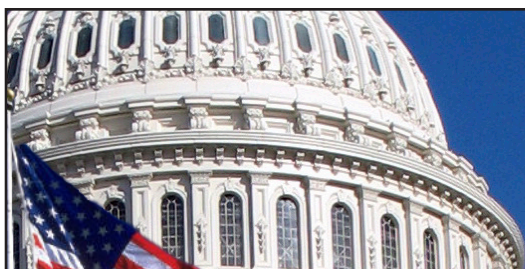
If we are to improve education, there needs to be an emphasis put on parental engagement in the student's education. Parents can't sit back and expect the school to educate their children if the children are not doing homework or studying. I don't know why, but everyone seems to tiptoe around this part as if it is out of our control. Administrators and teachers alike admit frequently behind closed doors that parent involvement, or lack of, tremendously impacts how the students perform. But schools have no solution for it. You can't demand or threaten parents to make their kids perform.

Sincerely,
Rob Piper

Parents can't sit back and expect the school to educate their children if the children are not doing homework or studying.



At AAE, we welcome your letters and comments. Address them to info@aaeteachers.org.



News from Washington, D.C.

Reports from AAE's Office
in the Nation's Capital

Department of Education Releases Final Guidelines for Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge

Following 2010's federal Race to the Top competitive grant program, the Department of Education has once again flagged an estimated \$700 million for an additional round of state-level grants. This year, the Obama administration plans to focus the majority of the funds on the nation's youngest students with their Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. The final guidelines of the program were released in late August.

The funding will be issued based on individual state-based plans to implement five key early education reforms including:

- Establishing Successful State Systems
- Defining High-Quality Accountable Programs
- Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
- Supporting a Great Early Childhood Education Work Force
- Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Entry Assessment

One of the more controversial reform ideas is the Obama administration's commitment to encouraging states to spearhead "kindergarten entry assessments," as outlined by both the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

While the prospect of creating tests for preschool-aged children may seem complicated and perhaps unrealistic, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan emphasized that the assessments will not be comparable to classic standardized tests.



In an interview this week, Duncan elaborated, "We will never ask 3-year-olds to take bubble tests. That would just be ludicrous."

Instead, the assessments will focus on preparing young children for kindergarten and ensuring they step into the classroom with a means to succeed. "We're talking about assessment in the broad context," said Department of Education Early Learning Specialist Jacqueline Jones. "We want to make a distinction between specific tests and an assessment process, which is an ongoing process of collecting information about children's behavior."

Pigeonholing Children

While some early learning advocates are calling the program a step in the right direction for preparing young children for

learning and the classroom environment, others see the focus on measurements of any kind too extreme. Executive Director of National Head Start Association Yasmina Vinci stressed that "children develop at very different rates, young children especially." Other experts argue that while collecting data and information on child development is critical, assessments should not be used to classify children at such early ages.

Despite the controversy, states eager for funding are expected to apply for the funds via lengthy proposals aimed at outlining their early childhood plans and their state's track record and prior commitments to early learning. The proposals are due October 19, and the winners will be announced sometime in December. ■

Professional Tools You Might Have Overlooked

How goals, words, and mentors can make a difference

By Jill Newell

One advantage that I believe teaching has over many professions is the “new beginning” with the onset of every school year. While many people, for the most part, only have January as an official time to set goals, most teachers and anyone involved in education officially start anew in August or September. I think it’s a benefit that we teachers can use as a motivator to achieve success in our profession.

Goals

Wherever you find yourself in your profession, may I suggest a serious effort to set professional goals this year if not already done. AAE’s Code of Ethics offers a good guide as to the “why” of goal-setting, stating: “The professional educator continues professional growth.” Take that statement as a continual challenge to improve and be the educator that students need to succeed.

Words

You might consider adopting a mantra—a simple phrase—you can repeat to yourself when you need encouragement. I have found this very helpful. For example, while in the process of learning Spanish, I had been studying it in school for about six years. I still had limited language acquisition, and I was not positive about ever achieving fluency. When anyone asked about my progress, I downplayed my efforts. Luckily, a mentor pointed out that many studies confirm the power of positive thinking and that I should try adopting a more positive attitude to improve my learning. Humbled by his advice, I adopted a three-word statement that became a powerful mantra when someone asked about my progress: “I am learning.” That present-progressive sentence reminded me that I was in the process, and I was moving forward. That was direction enough and motivation enough to keep going. Now when asked about my Spanish fluency, I respond, “Sí hablo, pero siempre estoy aprendiendo.” (Yes I speak Spanish, but I am always learning).

Moreover, attitude is contagious. A teacher’s optimistic attitude rubs off on students. Teachers are notorious for setting the tone in their classrooms whether it is one class period or an entire school year; the fact is, for the most part, you are the determining factor of how students view class time with you. Perhaps selecting a mantra for the class, posting it, and repeating it would be beneficial in maintaining a positive atmosphere and classroom culture throughout the year.

Similar to a mantra, a motivational quotation can offer a boost when students need it and direction when their goals seem far away. One of my colleagues in California posted motivational quotations throughout her classroom to act as a point of inspira-



tion for her students. Whether her students were working towards a goal to achieve a higher score or to understand a concept more clearly, the students were surrounded by positive quotes of encouragement.

Mentors

Of course, a written word is sometimes not enough. I suggest establishing a relationship with a mentor or person who can be a sounding board, a supporter, and a cheerleader to achieve your goals. These are individuals who encourage you, guide you, listen, and understand. It can be a friend, a family member, a significant other, a therapist, a colleague. These people are the ones you can turn to for support when you need motivation to continue with your goals.

A benefit of technology is that you can establish support network beyond the school and district. Professional learning communities and networks abound online. The more well-known venues such as Twitter, Facebook, and Edmodo have a plethora of conversations running that provide educators a place to share, to listen, to create, to worry, to solve, and to achieve. You can find people who are just like you and are going through similar experiences. You can also interact with teachers who are very different from yourself but whose classroom experiences will rejuvenate your effort to educate. You might find yourself mentoring a teacher and through that process discover the answers to our professional questions. All in all, as educators we have a network—a community with whom we can connect and be invigorated and supported.

The new school year is underway. As time wears on, select and use those tools, like mantras or mentors, which will keep you going strong. And pass that positivity onto students. This year you can be the best educator you have ever been. ■



Jill Newell is director of professional development for AAE. An active educator who has championed the use of technology in the classroom, Newell teaches an advanced conversational Spanish language course at Northern Virginia Community College and has taught in both suburban and inner-city.



Education Matters is a publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation (AAEF)
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Educators' Observations & Days 2011 - 2012

October 2011

Computer Learning Month
Learning Disabilities Month
National Book Month
World Teacher Day—10/5/2011
National Chemistry Week—10/16–10/23

November 2011

American Educator Week—11/13–11/19
Substitute Educators' Day—11/18

January 2012

Clean Off Your Desk Day—1/9/2012
National Handwriting Day—1/23/2012

February 2012

National School Counseling Week—2/6–2/10
National PTA Founders' Day—2/17

March 2012

National Middle Level Education Month
Music in Our Schools Month
Read Across America Day (NEA!)—3/2
National Foreign Language Week—3/5–3/11



April 2012

International Children's Book Day—4/2
National Library Week—4/8–4/14
National Library Workers' Day—4/10
Public School Recognition Week—4/15–4/21
National Student Leadership Week—4/15–4/21

May 2012

National Physical Education and Sports Month
National Physical Education and Sports Week—5/1–5/7
National Music Week—5/6–5/12
Teacher Appreciation Week—5/6–5/12
National Children's Book Week—5/7–5/13
School Nutrition Employee Week—5/7–5/11
National Teacher Day—5/8
National School Nurse Day—5/9
Educational Bosses' Week—5/20–5/26

Harvard Study Links Selection Criteria to Student Gains

A new study from Harvard University uses the Teach for America (TFA) selection criteria to link student gains to these top-tier recruited teachers, suggesting that it's possible to recruit candidates who are more likely to become effective educators.

TFA selects its recruits through a detailed process that uses a mix of standardized tests, essays, group projects, recommendations, and a sample teaching lesson. Using these mediums, TFA selects candidates based on qualities including achievement, leadership, perseverance, critical thinking, organization, motivational ability, respect, and whether the candidate believes TFA's goals are attainable.

Overall, the study's findings pointed toward students gains in relation to the teacher's quality strength. In math, for example, students who had TFA members with higher measures of achievement, leadership, and perseverance performed better than similar students. In English, while the data is not as concrete, leadership and fit were related to gains in student achievement.

To read the study, visit the online version of this newsletter at aateachers.org and click here.

Results of New Poll Confirm Need for Nonunion Teacher Organizations

A recent survey released by *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup* indicates that Americans overwhelming support teachers but not teacher unions. Among the survey results, 71 percent of respondents said that they have trust and confidence in America's teachers.

However, when asked about the teacher unions, 47 percent say they believe the unions have hurt education, compared to only 26 percent believing the unions have helped education. While the findings are nothing new to the growing number of teachers disenfranchised with their unions, it appears that the public has begun to draw a distinction between teachers as individual professionals, and the actions of the teacher unions.

AAE Executive Director Gary Beckner commented on the national poll today, releasing the following statement:

"This survey shows that Americans are beginning to realize the disconnect between teachers and unions. Unfortunately for teachers, they are often coupled with policies of the teacher unions that are bankrupting states, degrading the professionalism of teachers, and worst of all, hurting our nation's children." ■



To read *Betting on Teachers: The 43rd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools*, visit www.kappanmagazine.org.