

By Mike Antonucci

Teacher Turnover Turned Over

If you have followed education reporting at all for the past twenty years, you have seen the headlines: “Half of Teachers Quit in 5 Years,” “Public Education Faces a Crisis in Teacher Retention,” “High Teacher Turnover Rates are a Big Problem for America’s Public Schools,” “The Problem Isn’t Teacher Recruiting; It’s Retention.”

Then a few weeks ago, out of nowhere, we get this *Washington Post* headline: “Study: Far Fewer New Teachers Are Leaving the Profession Than Previously Thought.”

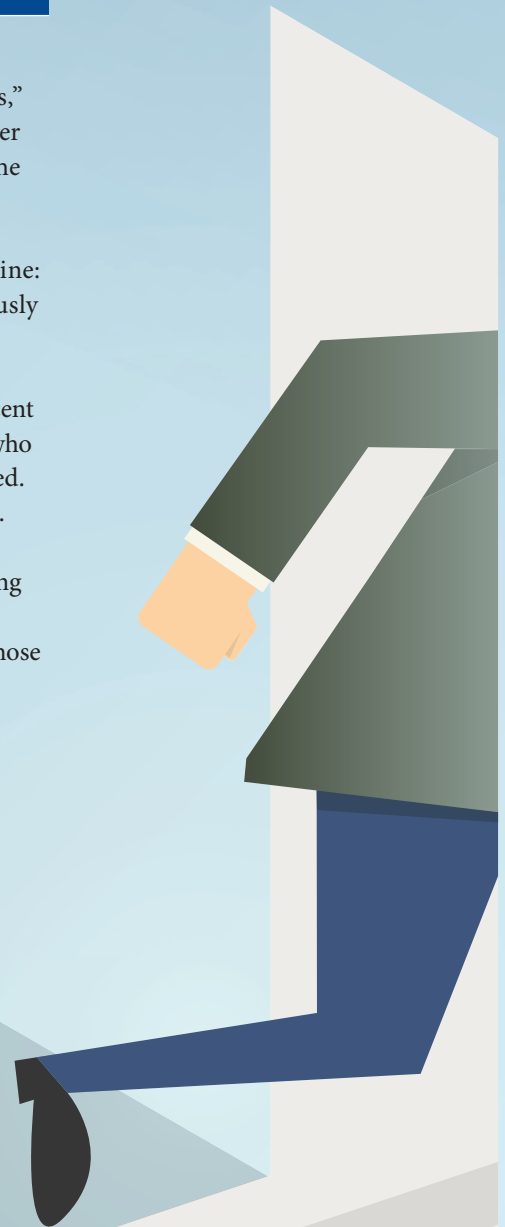
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that only 17 percent of new teachers had left the profession over a four-year period. Of the ones who did leave, between one-quarter and one-third were dismissed or non-renewed. Seventy percent of new teachers were still in the same school four years later.

This does not end the debate, of course. The NCES data covers a period during a deep recession, when everyone is less likely to leave a profession. It does, however, suddenly add all sorts of previously missing context and exposes those who were happy to spread alarmist rhetoric because it suited their purposes.

The mantra of “half of all new teachers leave within five years” has been repeated so often it has lost any meaning. Now we are hearing clarifications we never heard before.

Richard M. Ingersoll, the nation’s leading authority on teacher retention and turnover, called it “a crude approximation” last week. Perhaps he has always said so, but I cannot find a headline that reads “Half of Teachers Quit in Five Years, According to Professor’s Crude Approximation.” Ingersoll added that his estimate included private school teachers. Funny, that didn’t seem to make the cut in all those stories either.

Observers are now trying to determine if this is a hiccup, a product of our economic times, or the effect of recent education policies. I suggest it is none of these things, and that teacher turnover is, and has been, relatively steady at a relatively low rate.



Back in March 2001, NCES researchers completed a similar exercise. They identified full-time employees who held bachelor's degrees in April 1994 and tracked them until April 1997 to see who were working in the same profession three years later.

Eighty-two percent of K-12 teachers were still teaching K-12 three years later, the second highest retention rate of all professions. Only those in health occupations, at 83 percent, stayed in the same profession at a higher rate. Here's the relevant chart.

None of this even touches the question of why teachers leave the profession. All of the usual offering—poor pay, lack of respect, standardized testing—rank a lot lower than the personal reasons we all have for changing jobs—spouse relocating, having children, poor health.

The important thing to remember in this and other data-related cases is that inaccurate, incomplete, or misunderstood statistics hurt no one. They are purely academic. It is only when those numbers are used to support and justify public policy that they end up costing us in resources and missed opportunities. ■

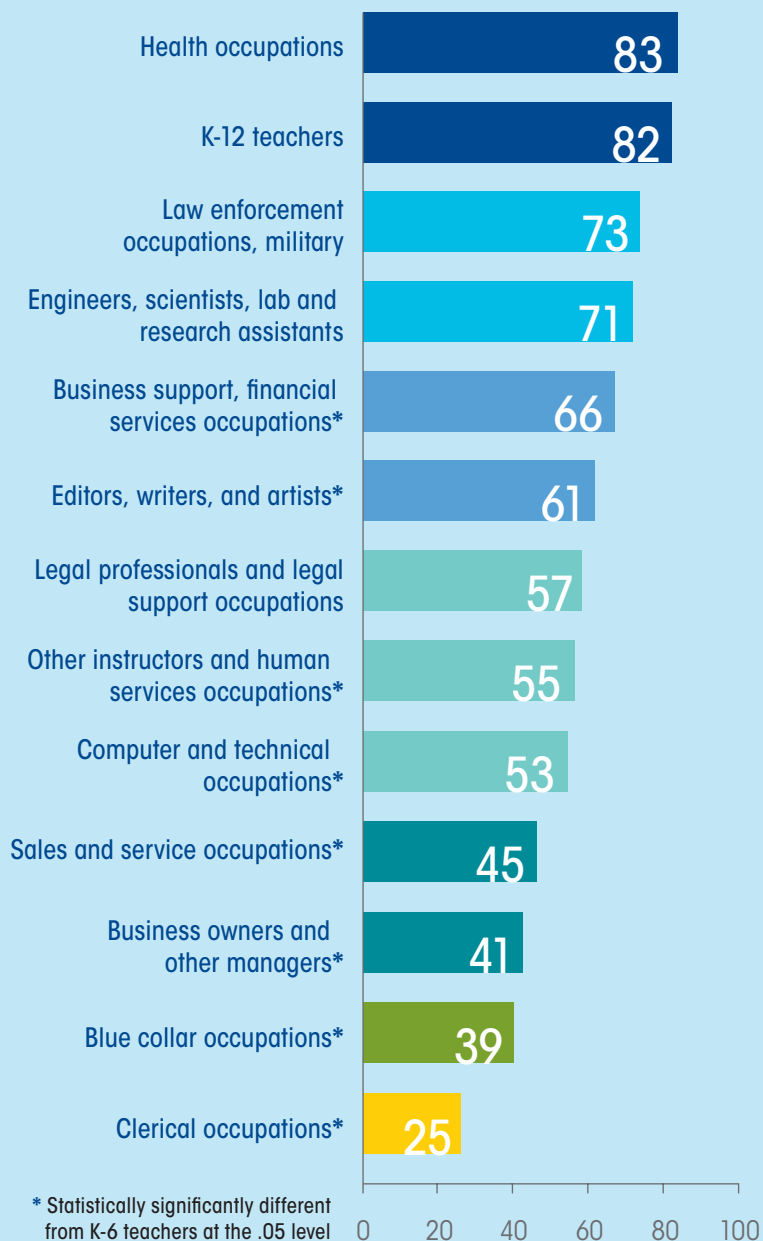
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Mike Antonucci is a writer, consultant, Air Force veteran, marathoner, specialist in military history, intelligence, cryptanalysis, and the Byzantine Empire. As the director of the Education Intelligence Agency

(an organization that specializes in education labor issues), Mike has a reputation for writing about public education and teachers' unions.

Figure D – Among 1992-93 bachelor's degree recipients who worked full time in April 1994, percentage who worked in the same occupation category in April 1997, by April 1994 occupation



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1992-93 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (B&B:93/97), Data Analysis System.

Voices from the Classroom: Why This Student Loves Her Charter School



Legacy Academy cannot be described in a just a few words. Legacy Academy's slogan is, "Education. Innovation. Technology." That doesn't even begin to explain what this school has to offer. I have been going to Legacy since I was in fifth grade. This August I will be starting my eighth-grade year. Legacy Academy has helped me grow more than I ever thought possible. From being years above my grade level in math, to being friends with almost everyone in middle school, I have definitely grown as a student, as a person, and as a friend.

The teachers here really care about students like me. They push us to our full potential even when we want to give up. In fact, all of the teachers at Legacy—whether elementary school, middle school, or specials teachers—are inspiring. Every single one of them not only strives for their own excellence but for ours as well.

Legacy was the first iSchool in the state of Colorado and one of the first in the country. Here at Legacy, every K-8 student is provided with an iPad for their school work. With iPads, teachers are better able to help students one-on-one. They're able to work with one child and not have to worry that the rest of the class is lost because it's all right there on the iPad. If you're not an auditory learner, and you can't keep up with what the teacher is saying, you can catch up with notes on the iPad at home. Having an iPad for schoolwork

also helps because you don't need all of the heavy textbooks; a bunch of textbooks are in one little device that you can hold with one hand.

As Malala Yousafzai said, "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." And to that point, my past schools hadn't given me the opportunities that Legacy has. In many other schools, half of the students fall behind in school curriculum and are completely lost when it comes to lectures. At Legacy, we rarely have that problem. In fact, most of the student population here excels academically in one or more subjects.

I believe that the iPads have definitely been key in preparing students for the future. I used to be one of those students who hated technology and did not want to come to a school filled with technology. However, despite my initial reluctance, I'm really ecstatic about it now. Since more and more jobs are integrating technology, it's extremely important to learn how to use it while we're still in school!



"Student use of iPads at Legacy has revolutionized teaching in the classroom because students are empowered to take control of their own education. Students literally

are able to access information from around the world in seconds. The technology that students have access to here enables them to become the leaders of tomorrow. It has completely changed my expectations of students' capabilities, and it has sparked both a curiosity and a desire for education beyond any other tool used in the classroom to date."

— **Mr. Branson, Legacy Academy**
English teacher ■

LEGACY ACADEMY

Legacy Academy is among the top performing schools in the Elbert County school district. It has a unique program for parents who want to homeschool and use the school resources. Math proficiency is, across the grades, higher than the average proficiency in Colorado. They have a lot to be proud of. All of these results on a fraction of the budget!

School Website: legacyk8.org



Jessica Cook is a seventh-grade student at Legacy Academy in Elizabeth, Colorado. Her favorite subject is math, but her teachers give her

great accolades in her writing abilities as well. She plays basketball, volleyball, and soccer. Her hobbies include singing, drawing, photography, and reading.

AAE Signs On as Friend of the Court in Landmark Supreme Court Case

This March, AAE joined an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief in support of the petition for certiorari in the *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* as part of a continuing effort to give individual teachers a professional voice outside the union.

This case is set to challenge the compulsory union dues laws in California and across the nation.

The primary purpose of this amicus brief is to apprise the Supreme Court justices of the persistent disagreements between many teachers and their union over fundamental issues of educational policy. This is important because it helps the Justices understand that these disagreements are not petty workplace disputes but are fundamental to the mission of public education.



Photo via World Magazine

As such they are inherently political disputes that deserve First Amendment protection.

Signing on with us as leaders of this growing movement are former California state officials who have had long experience with education reform battles, and various education reformers who can explain these disputes.

Teachers unions have taken great delight in exercising an unfair advantage to block much-needed education reform over the years, and a bipartisan coalition of individuals from both major parties has come to understand that this advantage is partly the result of millions of dollars of compulsory dues unions receive each year as a result of past Supreme Court decisions.

This case finally came to ahead on January 26th of this year when Friedrichs filed a petition to the Supreme Court to have her case heard.

Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association could fundamentally alter the relationship between union officials and teachers in a way that might significantly improve the chances for teachers freedom serious education reform. Stay tuned for more information on how AAE members can act as a resource in this effort. ■

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- AAE believes that teachers should not be forced to pay a union simply for the privilege of having a job in a public school. The practice of forcing dues from teachers' paychecks is called compulsory unionism or forced unionism.
- AAE believes that teachers, as college-educated professionals, should be able to decide whether union membership matches his or her budget and beliefs.
- There are thousands of educators who do not want to be represented by a union and do not want to pay union dues but are forced to because of certain state laws.
- Union dues are highest in states where there is compulsory unionism—sometimes twice as much as compared to states where teachers have the option not to join the union.

AAE Member Shout-Out:

Ms. Cassi Clausen is Another Example of Why AAE Loves Teachers!



fountain, a light switch, an automatic door closer, or anything else they can think of—using only old electronics, wire, wood, batteries, and other donated objects. When executing their plan for this project, students’ collaboration skills, creative problem-solving talents, and patience will be put to the test to trouble shoot and re-engineer their object and they will earn the satisfaction that comes from creating something out of almost nothing. Depending on the project they choose, students may learn basic electrical concepts, physics concepts such as inertia and momentum, as well as geometrical concepts needed to fit pieces together properly. All students will learn safety procedures and proper use of power tools.”

The AAE Foundation is committed to offering individual educators the means to optimize student learning with out-of-the-box initiatives. “I applaud the dedication that Cassi has demonstrated in pioneering a project with such a wide array of powerful lessons,” said AAEF Chairman Gary Beckner. “Without question, teachers like Cassi make AAE scholarships and grants a worthy investment in empowering educators to meet their professional potential!” ■

We love our members because they’re the cream of the crop among teachers. And we don’t just say that. We **KNOW** it. That’s why we’d like to introduce you to one of this year’s spring scholarship and grant winners, Ms. Cassi Clausen.

Ms. Clausen is a high school physics teacher at The Open School in Los Angeles, California. She earned a classroom grant from the AAE Foundation to fund tools she needed for a project inspired by the concept behind Gever Tulley’s Tinkering School.

“The Tinkering School’s philosophies are based on the assumptions that kids are more capable than they know, the freedom to fail is essential, and it can be done bigger and bolder. Students will have time to explore and craft which will create an atmosphere of curiosity, self-control, persistence, leadership, and creativity,” explained Ms. Clausen.

“In our class of thirty students, we will host our very own ‘Junkyard Wars.’ Teams of students will work to create new objects that serve particular functions—be it a water

AAE FOUNDATION’S NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

The AAE Foundation’s National Scholarships and Grants competition is held twice a year in the fall and spring and is open to all educators. The deadlines are March 1 and October 1 of every year. Don’t forget to apply this fall! For more information, visit aaeteachers.org/awards.

AAE MEMBER EXCLUSIVE: Scaffolded Learning with Modern Technologies

E*ducation Matters* has recently afforded space to articles that have both encouraged and questioned the use of modern technologies (e.g., Wikis, social media like Glogster, Edmodo, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, and various other Web 2.0 tools) in the classroom. Previously, I wrote (*Purposeful Learning with Modern Technologies*, November 2012) to describe ways in which technologies can be wisely employed to encourage student participation, and facilitate their discourse and deliberation as students reason together about the world around them. Here I intend to explore another affordance that I believe supports the increased use of modern technologies in classrooms: “scaffolding” student learning.

For more than three decades, teachers and researchers have referred to “scaffolding” in relation to helping students think in more critical, higher-ordered ways. Just as construction crews often use metal scaffolding to reach higher to physically build structures, teachers are thought to similarly scaffold their students to each reach higher and more critical levels of thought.



SHARE YOUR STORY

Have you written an education-related article you'd like to see published in *Education Matters*? AAE is always looking to share member stories with our AAE family! Email it to editor@aaeteachers.org using subject line “*EDUCATION MATTERS* SUBMISSION.”

Elaborating further, some scholars have identified scaffolding in two categories: *hard* and *soft*. They describe hard scaffolds as static supports that anticipate general difficulties (e.g., handouts and advanced organizers), and soft scaffolds as dynamic, situation-specific aids to help learners process data, e.g., just-in-time conversations.

For teachers who believe, as I do, that all students are capable of higher levels of thinking when properly supported, scaffolding becomes a crucial fundament of meaningful instruction. For all learners to individually develop the many skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for critical thinking, teachers must appeal to each student’s needs, often at the moment the need is presented. In my experience, modern technologies provide the time and opportunity to assist all students in the varied ways they need assistance. ■



Dr. Cory Callahan taught students in Alabama and Georgia social studies for fourteen years before becoming an assistant professor at the University of Alabama. He has been awarded several teaching excellence awards, including a 2011 Jacobs Educator Award for exemplary use of technology in K-12 classrooms, the 2012 Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and The History Channel’s Alabama History Teacher of the Year Award.

Teachers Love AAE: They Even Told Us So!

“I have greatly enjoyed being a member of AAE. I love that it offers scholarship and grant programs to teachers that are not super time-intensive to apply for. After all, who has lots of extra time to apply for money? I also like the fact that AAE supports right-to-work legislation. While I personally have never been forced to join a union, it is always a fear of mine when I apply at public schools. Since I will be job hunting again for the 2015-2016 school year, I know that AAE will have my back if I do teach at a public school, even though I won't join the union!”

— **Caroline Ill of Illinois**

“I have been a member of AAE for a few years now and I just wanted to say how much I appreciate being a part of it. It's great to have an organization that does not have politics as the main focus but takes my concerns as a professional to heart. My wife and I have been able to share our experiences and many have joined. Thanks AAE!”

— **Steve Sexton of Nebraska**

“I can't express the appreciation I felt this morning when you came to our staff meeting. You were so incredibly thoughtful for bringing treats, goodie bags, and the basket full of all the essential teacher items. It was a great feeling coming back from spring break to an email from AAE stating that I have received this \$500 award. A 3-day training for Social Thinking with Michelle Garcia Winner is around \$460. I am continuing to work on finding other funding sources to cover my substitute teacher costs, resource expenses, and also funding so that my school counselor can also attend the conference with me. I work with a special group of professionals who are all very dedicated to our students. This grant money will allow us the opportunity to continue to set our students up for success in their future. I greatly appreciate AAE's generosity as I continue my pursuit of being a lifelong learner alongside my students. Thank you again for an amazing day!”

— **Emily Dietrich of Wisconsin**



DO YOU LOVE AAE TOO?

Here at AAE we love our teachers.

That's why we protect them by offering top-notch liability insurance, why we give them a voice in Washington with our annual teacher survey, and why we provide scholarships and grants to some of the wisest and brightest teachers in America!

We hope you love us too!

In fact, if you tell us about it, you could win big! Over the coming months, AAE will be looking for teachers—LIKE YOU—who have found a home with AAE and want to tell the world. That's why we're handing you the megaphone for a chance to have your love for AAE published in one of AAE's publications. If we publish your testimonial, we will even send you a gift!

So what are you waiting for? Visit surveymonkey.com/s/WhyILoveAAE today and tell us why AAE is the association for you!

TELL YOUR COLLEAGUES ABOUT AAE

Are your colleagues interested in joining you as an AAE member? Send them to aaeteachers.org/membership to learn more!





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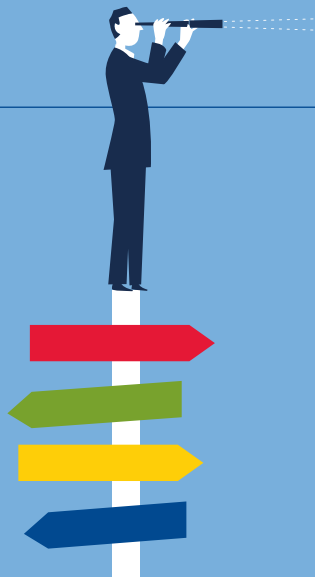
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Are you an AAE member looking for a job? Let us know, and we'll help you in your search. If you've found a job, have a recommendation for a district we should look at, or have a job that you'd like us to list, let us know that as well: aaeteachers.org/jobs.



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