

EDUCATION MATTERS

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation

2016 AAE National Membership Survey: Professional Educators Embrace Solutions

Competing in a new global economy is a top national priority. Citing declining student performance in core subjects, policymakers are calling for solutions that give our students an edge. At the Association of American Educators, we know that our growing network of professional educators will be instrumental in building the bridge between sweeping education reform proposals and genuine solutions that work in America's classrooms. With a strong professional voice, AAE members can be champions for positive change and student advancement.

A driving force for professionalism in education, AAE is a growing movement of talented and esteemed teachers who are dedicated to the profession. In fact, 83 percent of survey respondents report being either satisfied or very satisfied with their chosen career path, 85 percent have been teaching for six years or more, and 93 percent are using technology in the classroom at least some of the time.

AAE's 2016 National Membership Survey examines some of the nation's most pressing policy priorities including school choice and technology, teacher preparation and leadership, testing and assessments, workforce policy, and the 2016 presidential election. Although some organizations claiming to represent teachers maintain opposition to reform policy in

AAE
Educators

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general, AAE members are eager to embrace solutions that demonstrate professionalism and putting students first.

School Choice Policies

School choice means new and rewarding opportunities for educators. AAE has been vocal about supporting educators in all academic settings, and many members have embraced specific policies that increase options for students and teachers alike.

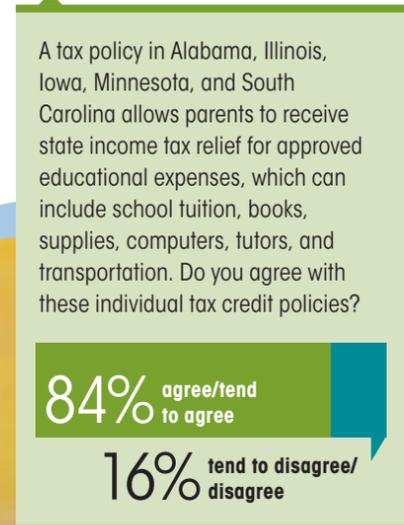
For example, a near unanimous 95 percent of survey respondents expressed support for course choice for students. This innovative policy allows students to craft an à la carte education uniquely tailored to their learning needs via courses from colleges, public high schools, virtual schools, and various online providers.

Less than two-thirds of high schools across the country offer physics. Just half offer calculus. Using a policy known as course choice, students are able to craft an à la carte education uniquely tailored to their learning needs. Louisiana's course choice program enables K-12 students to take courses from colleges, public high schools, virtual schools, and various online providers. It enables students to access Advanced Placement and career and technical education courses, allowing them to earn high school and college credit, and industry-based certifications. Do you support course choice?

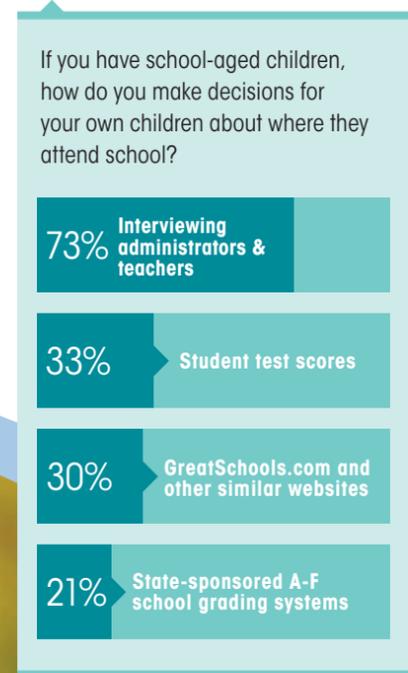


Another 79 percent of teachers surveyed expressed support for public charter schools. These unique public schools are provided the flexibility to innovate but cannot select students and must satisfy the same requirements as district schools.

AAE members also expressed support (84 percent) for existing tax policies that allow parents to receive state income tax relief for education expenses. Similarly, another 71 percent expressed support for Nevada's Education Savings Account (ESA) program. The program allows parents to use some of the public funding earmarked for their child to pay for school-related services and tuitions.

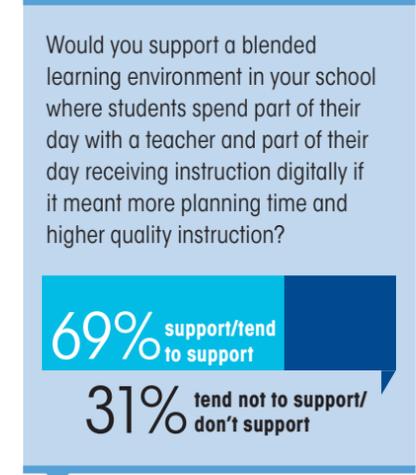


Many AAE members are also parents who carefully examine and explore educational choice for themselves and/or their families. While 73 percent of respondents say they interview teachers and administrators when selecting a school for their children, 33 percent examine student test scores, 30 percent examine websites like GreatSchools.com, and 21 percent take advantage of state-sponsored A-F school grading systems. Interestingly, 38 percent of surveyed members are currently benefiting from school choice policies.

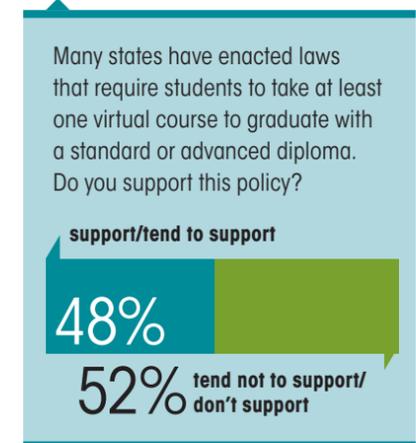


Virtual Education & Technology

Today's students have embraced technology like no other generation has. To keep up with the trends of the 21st century, certain policies have been enacted to incorporate and encourage online learning. AAE members are willing to embrace innovation but have expressed concern with scalability and access.



Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents expressed support for a blended learning environment where students spend part of their day with a teacher and part of their day receiving instruction through technology. Although the concept is exciting to many teachers, AAE members are evenly divided about requiring students to take an online class to graduate high school.



“Despite a consensus by policymakers to raise the bar for incoming teachers, AAE members are nearly evenly split in calling for an actual bar-like examination of teachers entering the profession.”

Another 56 percent of teachers either disagreed or tended to disagree with the suggestion that textbooks should be phased out for digital content in the future. “Technology is not always reliable and both are needed,” cited one respondent. An AAE member further remarked, “This is a great idea for high school but we need to ease into a requirement for younger students.”

This overall decrease in support may reflect common implementation challenges facing American classrooms. Many states and districts have called for increased investment in equipment, training, and access to high speed connections for long-term success.

Teacher Preparation & Leadership

Research shows that having a quality teacher in front of a group of students is the single biggest factor in determining success. For years, AAE members have been vocal about the need for attracting and retaining excellent teaching talent.

Over three quarters of survey respondents (77 percent) agreed with

a recent NCTQ report that ranks schools of education and recommends requiring rigorous teacher prep program admission tests, an admission GPA of 3.0 or higher, and the passage of subject-matter tests as a condition of admission into teacher programs. Despite a consensus by policymakers to raise the bar for incoming teachers, AAE members are nearly evenly split in calling for an actual bar-like examination of teachers entering the profession.

Another 68 percent expressed support for attracting new teachers and teachers with experience in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects via alternative certification programs, allowing degreed professionals an easier path to the classroom.

The majority of American teachers are white females, despite increasing diversity in the classroom. To meet the needs of our changing student demographics, 73 percent of AAE survey respondents expressed some support for efforts to recruit well-qualified teachers who are more representative (color and/or gender) of the student population.



Would you be supportive of a hybrid teaching role? This position would include teaching in the classroom part time combined with other roles or responsibilities in your school or district.



Teachers are also interested in developing in their careers. Seventy-six percent expressed at least some interest in a hybrid teaching role that would combine teaching in the classroom part time with additional leadership roles in their school or district.

Testing and Assessments

New assessments and testing requirements have been a topic of discussion in communities nationwide. AAE members have expressed concern with overtesting but maintain committed to measuring success. As one member remarked, "Assessments allow everyone to know their strengths and weaknesses. How else can we compare apples to apples?"

According to the data, 78 percent of members surveyed expressed some support for requiring students to pass proficiency tests to graduate from high school.

Do you support a student requirement to pass proficiency tests to graduate from high school?



U.S. Department of Education officials have proposed capping standardized testing at 2% of classroom time. Do you support this proposal?



With regard to testing requirements, 86 percent of AAE members expressed support for the U.S. Department of Education's proposal of capping standardized testing at 2 percent of classroom time.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) remain a hotly debated subject. Seventy-four percent of AAE members feel either well prepared or somewhat prepared to use the standards in their classrooms. However, 68 percent of teachers surveyed expressed some concern with the standards being developmentally appropriate. Only 8 percent of respondents believe the standards are fully appropriate for their current grade levels.

Workforce Policy

With a *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* Supreme Court Case in deliberation and states like West Virginia enacting a Right-to-Work law, there is a real possibility that the current obligation of agency fee payments to labor unions in many states will end. A system protecting freedom of association for all teachers could produce additional changes to how the teaching workforce is compensated and organized.

Teachers are willing to adopt policies that account for unique circumstances. In fact, 67 percent of AAE members expressed support for negotiating their own contract so that they could negotiate a salary and benefits package that best suits their lifestyles. Another 67 percent expressed interest in a "Worker Choice" policy that would allow a teacher to opt out of the collective bargaining agreement in the district and negotiate their own salary and benefits package.

"Worker Choice" would allow a teacher to opt out of the collective bargaining agreement in the district and negotiate their own salary and benefits package. Do you agree with this policy?



With regard to declining budgets and the changing demographics of the teaching profession, AAE members are interested in policies that can serve a changing workforce. An overwhelming 78 percent of teachers expressed support for offering competitive salaries and benefits packages with different types of individuals in mind, including an à la carte benefits plan where prospective hires could pick and choose salaries and benefits based on need. Another 82 percent of teachers recognized the need for a choice between a traditional pension plan and the opportunity to invest in a portable 401(k) for new teachers.

The 2016 Presidential Election

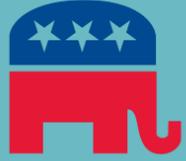
A majority (58 percent) of members surveyed believe that public education is currently getting too little attention in the 2016 presidential election. When asked how presidential candidates should share their ideas on education policy, AAE

teachers cited televised debates (71 percent) and policy documents (68 percent) as top strategies for getting their messages across.

AAE members overwhelmingly suggested two areas of focus for the presidential candidates. Sixty percent strongly support providing teachers more time, tools, and support for teachers to succeed, including planning, collaboration, and development. Another 70 percent of teachers strongly supported increasing compensation to attract and reward teachers as professionals.

As the profession changes in 2016, teachers are embracing solutions. AAE is listening, and we look forward to sharing your thoughts with policy-makers on all levels. ■

For more information about the 2016 National Membership Survey visit aaeteachers.org/natsurvey.

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of members surveyed believe that public education is currently getting too little attention in the 2016 election.



Do you know a teacher who would make an excellent member of the AAE family? Send him/her to aaeteachers.org/membership to learn more about the preferred choice for teachers!



The Three Key Mistakes Teacher-Leaders Make



Teachers who become teacher-leaders naturally strive toward creating broad, positive changes that have a big impact. As we strive toward these goals, we are also prone to making three key mistakes that can undermine the work we're doing to strengthen our schools, communities and the world of education. Knowing these mistakes can help us avoid them:

Mistake #1: Saying "Yes" to Everything.

As teachers, we can only do so much. As teacher-leaders, we can only do so much *more*. With so many of us already living up to the stereotype of arriving at work well before the first bell rings, crafting lesson plans until the darkest hours of the night (not to mention the work we do on weekends and vacations), too often, already hard-working teachers are thrust into leadership roles, fearful of saying "no" as new opportunities arise. While teacher leadership should open up lots of new opportunities, it should *not* be equated with lots more work.

Tip to avoid Mistake #1: Choose your "yesses" carefully. When you say "yes," don't be afraid to ask for time or financial compensation. When it's "no," learn to confidently say things like, "That sound like a great opportunity. Unfortunately my plate is full right now, and I want to say focused on (fill in the blank), so I'm going to need to pass." Often, you'll find that people actually respect you more for saying "no," and standing by your boundaries.

Mistake #2: Being Shy About Our Success.

Teacher-leaders often accomplish great things in education. As educators, most of us are pretty humble people, so the idea of seeking attention for these great things makes us want to run and hide, instead of embrace it and shine under the spotlight. (Sometimes fellow teachers even begrudge the attention.) However, not allowing our successes to reach as many students, parents, community members and other teachers as possible is a mistake that ultimately stymies the work we do to make impactful changes.

Tip to avoid Mistake #2: Build a network of other teacher-leaders who will support you in your successes: people like you—who struggle, rejoice and show up

every day to do the work that has an impact both within and beyond our classrooms. Find them on twitter, at conferences and within your professional organizations. Surrounding yourself with other leaders is one of the best decisions you can make—both for the work you do, and the person you become.

Mistake #3: Not Looking Outside of Education for Answers.

While the concept of teachers as leaders may be obvious to those of us inside of education, the amount of research and discussion on teacher leadership pales in comparison to the amount of information available on leadership itself. Let's look to successful corporate, political and non-profit models and champions of leadership, and bring the lessons they've learned back into education.

Tip to avoid Mistake #3: Check out the work of leadership experts like Steve Farber, Lynda Gratton, Simon Sinek, or Meg Wheatley. Their work applies to the work we do inside of education, and helps us better understand the working world our students are entering. Also check out authors like Brene' Brown and Malcolm Gladwell, and memoirs of leaders you admire, to bring outside wisdom into your teacher leadership.

Everyone makes mistakes, even great teacher-leaders. Still, aiming to avoid these three particular pitfalls can help us all accomplish more for our students, schools, communities and profession. ■

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Alex Kajitani is the 2009 CA Teacher of the Year, and a Top-4 Finalist for National Teacher of the Year. His book, *Owning It: Proven Strategies for Success in ALL of Your Roles As a Teacher Today*, was recommended by the USDE. Alex's popular TED Talk has been honored at The White House, and featured in numerous media, including *The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric*.

AAE Teacher Survey of the Month

What one educational game have you found to have the biggest impact on student learning?

Take the survey at tinyurl.com/aaeMar16Survey today and be entered to win one of two uKloo games up for grabs—just for letting us know.

You can also scan the QR code to take this one-question survey on your phone!



Solve the riddles to find a surprise!

uKloo Riddle Edition is for kids who like to think. An engaging seek-and-find literacy game, it combines thinking skills with physically active fun. It encourages kids to call upon their logic and reasoning abilities to solve riddles towards finding a surprise.

The Riddle Edition was created in response to the many parents who told us how much they loved uKloo Early Reader Treasure Hunt. They wanted a next-step game that would help kids seven and older to reach even higher reading levels.



Parents were also looking for ways to include older siblings who wanted to join the treasure hunt. Why should the little ones have all the fun?

Shhh! Don't tell the kids that it's educational!

Kids are having so much fun playing uKloo that they have no idea that they are actually building their reading skills! The excitement of finding hidden clue cards and running around the house on a treasure hunt is so engaging that the kids are reading without even realizing it! When the kids get stuck on a word, they are empowered to look up the word themselves with the aid of a Picture Helper Poster, as a reference tool to decode the clue card.

Download from iTunes



A googly-eyed periscope? A pig wearing a hat? You just never know what animated surprise your child will uncover when they play the uKloo Early Reader App.

uKloo Early Reader App is a fun seek-and-find literacy game for ages four and up. It expands uKloo learning into new digital environments as it encourages kids to look up word clues, search the play screen and discover surprises along the way! And, there's even a picture helper to look up words when kids get stuck! ■

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Thank you for Making National School Choice Week 2016 a HUGE Success

National School Choice Week (NSCW) is over but for AAE the excitement of the week certainly hasn't worn off. Thanks to teachers like YOU, National School Choice Week 2016 shattered records. Here's a look at the major numbers:

- **16,745** events across America during NSCW 2016
- **33** governors and **240** mayors and county leaders issued proclamations
- **160** organizations and schools helped plan independent school choice celebrations at **20** state capitols
- The US Senate voted unanimously to designate Jan. **24-30** as National School Choice Week
- **39,900** tweets about #SchoolChoice, reaching **32** million people online
- More people searched for the term, "school choice," on Google than during any other time over the last **7** years

Thank you for your leadership! AAE is proud to shine a spotlight on teacher and student options. ■

