

# EDUCATION MATTERS

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation

## WHAT'S NEXT for America's Educators?

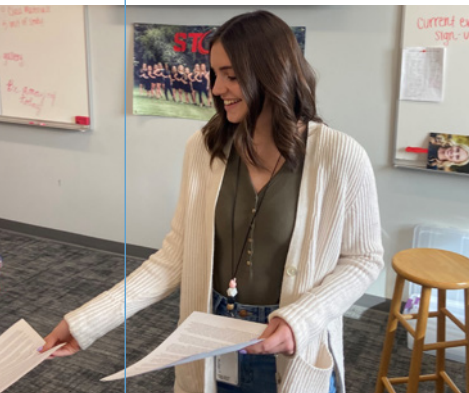


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# Student Teacher of the Year Award

Approximately 200,000 student teachers are in schools every year. Student teaching is the final clinical experience and is an important phase of training in preparation for a career as a professional educator. It is the first opportunity to put years of study and theory into practice. During this intense time frame, student teachers will navigate the rigors of a real school schedule, work with colleagues, mentors, and administrators, engage with parents, hone classroom management skills, and prepare lesson plans. Most importantly, student teachers work directly with students. This dream-come-true is what student teachers have been looking forward to for a very long time. However, as any seasoned educator will attest, not every lesson goes as planned, not every day is that exactly-as-scheduled prepared-for day. Such days can test one's mettle; yet often, these days can be when the magic learning moments happen, for both classroom students and student teachers.

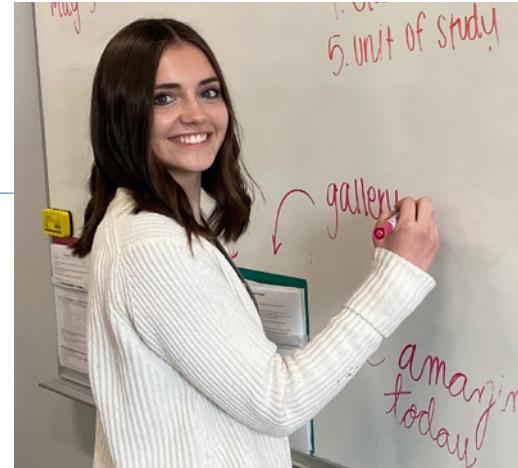


Student teachers play an integral role in the life of an educational community. Their energy and new perspectives bring a rich vibrancy to school cultures. All educators can recall their days as student teachers and those early colleagues and mentors who supported them in fulfilling their dream to

teach. That is why long-time educator and AAE member Darrell Holmquist and his wife Suzanne decided they wanted to recognize this very important educator in the form of an award through a generous donation. The Darrell and Suzanne Holmquist Student Teacher of the Year Award was launched in 2021. "In my college days, many helping hands and broad shoulders helped prepare me to become a successful teacher. It's our turn to reward and aid today's young people who will educate students of the latest generation," reflected Mr. Holmquist.

The award's first recipient in 2021 was Kristine Harris Dalmas. Today, she teaches Eastern geographical perspectives and freshman

cornerstone at Owyhee High School in Meridian, Idaho. She also enjoys her role as varsity dance coach. She found her win to be life-changing and extremely helpful in successfully launching her educator career, saying, "I had the great pleasure to be awarded the first Darrell and Suzanne Holmquist Student Teacher of the Year Award. This award was instrumental to the success that I have had in my classroom this school year. I was able to provide my classroom with basic supplies, furniture, and educational instructional materials. I am very thankful to the Holmquists and the Association of American Educators for providing this opportunity to continue to build and support educators across the country."



The Darrell and Suzanne Holmquist Student Teacher of the Year Award includes \$250 toward setting up a new classroom and a one-year professional membership in AAE.

The Darrell and Suzanne Holmquist Student Teacher of the Year Award includes \$250 toward setting up a new classroom and a one-year professional membership in AAE. The competition is for all student teachers who completed their student teaching in the 2021-2022 school year and are entering the classroom for the first time in fall 2022. We look forward to announcing this year's winner soon! For more information and questions regarding award details, email [awards@aaeteachers.org](mailto:awards@aaeteachers.org). ■

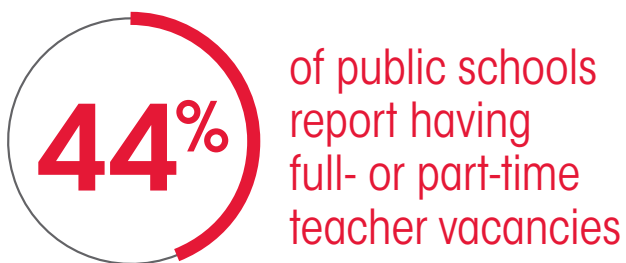


Christina Mazzanti is the senior director of communications for the Association of American Educators. She is responsible for advancing AAE's mission, growth, and member service delivery through internal and external communications strategies.

# The Great Teacher Resignation

## How Has the Pandemic Affected the Profession? What are the Long-Term Implications for the Teacher Pipeline?

**W**e've all read the headlines and followed the news. The outlook for the teaching profession sounds dire — teacher shortages from coast to coast, shortened in-class school weeks, lengthened winter and spring breaks, substitutes getting top-dollar for covering multiple classes a day, teachers foregoing planning time to fill in for absent teachers, college students and National Guard members stepping in as substitutes, retired educators being coaxed back into the classroom with the assurance that they can keep their full retirement benefits and still draw a salary for returning to full-time teaching.



The widely reported workforce impact of the pandemic has been dubbed “the Great Resignation” and it has affected almost every workforce category in the nation including that of teachers. In February, according to *The Washington Post*, across employment categories, workers switched jobs at near-record rates with 4.4 million workers leaving their positions in a historically tight labor market. Are teachers sick with COVID, sick and tired — or just plain done? Is this the beginning of a mass exodus from the profession? Are we witnessing the “five-alarm crisis” portended

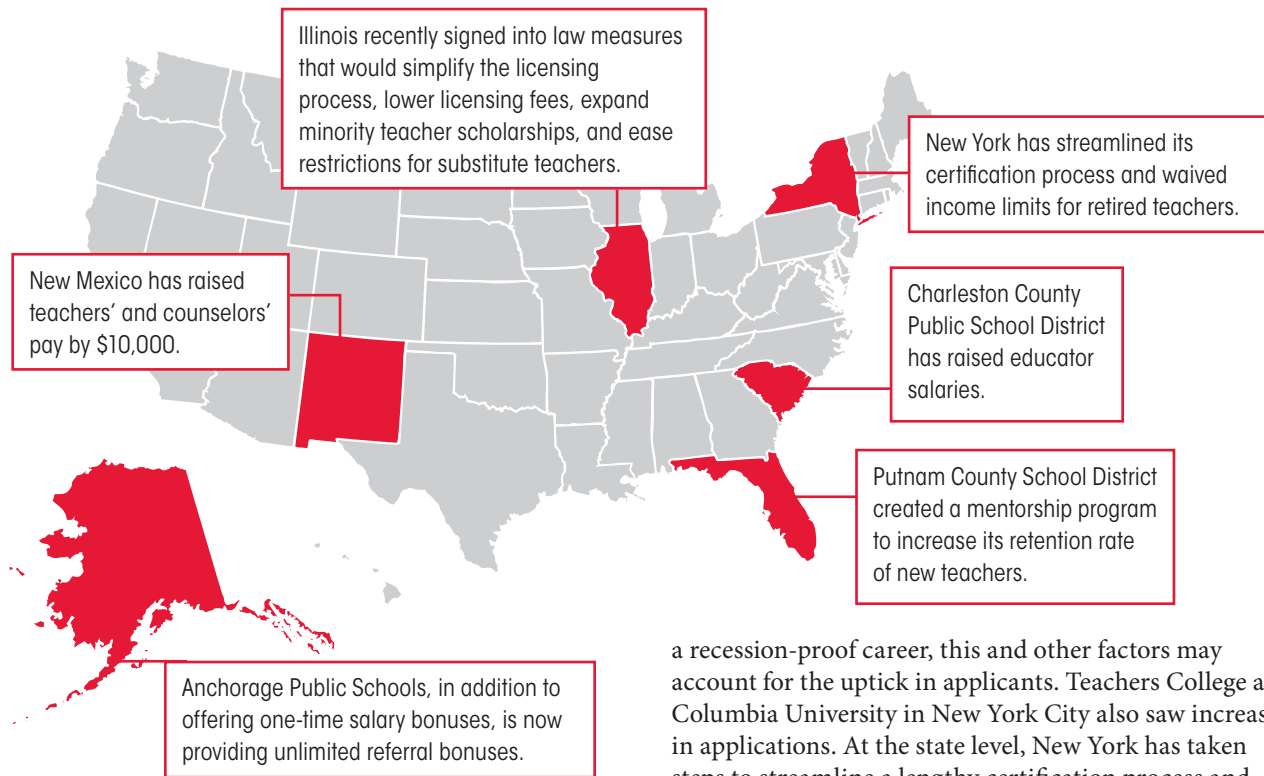
by the NEA’s Betty Pringle? Or is it too early to assess the lasting effect of this accumulated exhaustion? We will explore the pressures on the profession, whether there are pockets of hope in the current data, and what opportunities lie ahead for rebuilding a robust professional educator workforce.

According to the Bureau of Labor statistics data, approximately 8 percent of educators leave the profession each year. There are 567,000 fewer educators today than before the pandemic. The National Center for Educational Statistics confirmed 44 percent of public schools report having full- or part-time teacher vacancies. The emotional, professional, and personal tolls the last two years have taken on even the most highly rated and experienced educators have undeniably affected the current educator population and is adding to the challenges of attracting and retaining a strong and diverse workforce pipeline.

### Carrots and Sticks

To stem the tide of educators leaving mid school year and mid contract, district-level task forces are being created and are increasingly considering suspending or even revoking educators’ teaching certificates for job abandonment.

In addition to such ‘stick’ measures, a variety of ‘carrots’ are being offered to motivate educators to stay on the job and address job-related stressors that are making educators consider leaving the field at a higher rate than employed adults nationally. Pay raises, wellness



programs, mental health resources, and professional development incentives are far more available than prior to the pandemic. The Putnam County School District in northeastern Florida created a mentorship program to increase its retention rate of new teachers. Illinois recently signed into law a slate of measures that would simplify the licensing process, lower licensing fees, expand minority teacher scholarships, and ease restrictions for substitute teachers. New Mexico has raised teachers' and counselors' pay by \$10,000. Charleston County Public School District in South Carolina has also raised educator salaries. In Alaska, Anchorage Public Schools' creative staffing solution, in addition to offering one-time salary bonuses, is now providing unlimited referral bonuses. Other states have dipped into stimulus funds to give teachers bonuses, but that does little for long-term retention.

### Pipeline Projections

Many schools of education are experiencing a downturn in applications, adding to a trend that began prior to the pandemic. According to a survey by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 19 percent of undergraduate-level teaching programs and 11 percent of graduate-level teaching programs saw a significant reduction in enrollment. However, some teacher preparation programs are seeing increases in enrollment. California State University in Long Beach experienced an enrollment climb of 15 percent. As teaching has historically been considered

a recession-proof career, this and other factors may account for the uptick in applicants. Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City also saw increases in applications. At the state level, New York has taken steps to streamline a lengthy certification process and waived income limits for retired teachers in an effort to draw in more talent.

### Outlook for the Future

If the profession is to flourish and be a respected, financially viable career path for those with a desire to teach, many of these temporary measures must become not only permanent but be the stepping stones to larger innovative measures that will attract and retain a diverse, highly qualified workforce. Research is also being done on rethinking the structure of classroom teaching, exploring how teams of educators rather than the traditional one-teacher one-classroom instruction model could not only increase learning outcomes but also reduce the impact of teacher shortage as well as minimize burnout. According to Brent Maddin, executive director of the Next Education Workforce Initiative at Arizona State University, "Teacher shortages will only continue to get worse until we fundamentally redesign our school staffing models. We don't have just a teacher shortage problem. We have a workforce design problem." ■

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have you changed your outlook on how long you'll remain in education? Is your school facing a new shortage due to early retirements and resignations?

Email [editor@aaeteachers.org](mailto:editor@aaeteachers.org) with your comments.



# FOCUS ON FELLOWS

# Kristina Eisenhower



**K**ristina Eisenhower was born and raised in central Arkansas and calls Cabot, Arkansas, home. She is a fifteen-year veteran teacher, small business owner, and mother of three. She has served her district as a classroom teacher, math interventionist and dyslexia interventionist, and PreK-4 instructional coach. She is an Association of American Educators Advocacy Fellow class of 2022. This is her inspirational story of what led her to become a teacher.

She comes from a low-income family full of love. Her dad works a 7-to-5 job, barely making ends meet. The class Christmas party is coming up. Her fifth-grade teacher has instructed every student to bring \$1.25 to the party for pizza. She has searched the couch cushions, pockets, piggy banks and dryer for change. She's afraid to ask her father for any money, knowing that last week they didn't have enough for "extras" at the grocery store. As she scrambles to brush her hair before the bus arrives at the end of the driveway, she shoves the six dimes and two pennies that she has managed to find around the house down into the pocket of her jeans. On the way to school, she plays the conversation she will have with her teacher in her head, over and over again. Does she tell her teacher that her dad just forgot? Does she tell the truth?

That girl was me. I went to school that day without sufficient funds to enjoy a slice or two of pizza at the party. After informing my teacher that I only had 62 cents in my pocket, she sent me to the cafeteria to eat lunch, since I was on the free and reduced-price lunch program. I ate in that lonely cafeteria by myself during our Christmas party that year. I wasn't sad. I wasn't disappointed. I was a child, and I knew I didn't have the money for the pizza party, but I was still getting fed.

Fast-forward sixteen years. I'm now a first-grade teacher, but that memory is still clear — as though it happened yesterday. When I walked into my first-grade classroom at a Title I school, I found my love for teaching. I related to my students. I understood their struggles. I loved them and set high expectations for their future. Just because they were low-socioeconomic kiddos with a mountain of struggles ahead of them didn't mean they couldn't overcome them and bring themselves out of that financial status. And let me tell you — not one kiddo who ever came through my classroom has ever had to miss a party, whether they brought money or not. I wasn't ever going to allow my students to lose out on an opportunity based on whether they had enough funds. Not one student has gone home without a coat. Not one student has gone without lunch or breakfast.

I attended a professional development conference years ago led by educator Rita Pearson. She focused on students who are too often underserved. She said, "Kids are not going to learn for you if they don't love you." It's probably one of the most honest statements I have ever heard. Students must have their basic needs met, a feeling of being loved and high expectations set for them. And that's why I love teaching. I see myself in them, and once they trust me and love me, the light bulbs turn on and the magic happens.

A colleague of mine once said, "We teach in a Title I school. We will never outscore the other schools." Teachers in Title I schools not only have to meet the educational needs of students but also their social, emotional and physical needs. We pack food bags for students, make sure they have proper clothing, provide internet services for at-home learning and research resources for parents, counsel families and so much more. Do teachers in Title I schools have to work harder? Yes. Do we have to love a bit harder? Yes. But you'll find students just like me in all schools, no matter the socioeconomic status of the community. They may have to work harder than their more privileged peers, but it's these students who come back year after year to thank a teacher who pushed them to be the better version of themselves.

No matter the home life that students come from, they can be high performing. I'm here to tell you: Love them. I taught that student who didn't have running water, lived in a single parent home, with no working vehicle. I made sure he had a shower at school in the morning, clean clothes, and was fed. At the end of the year, he was my highest-performing student.

Socioeconomic status doesn't matter. Love does. ■

This essay originally appeared in *The 74 Million* on March 2, 2022  
<https://bit.ly/3yu49UZ>

# FOCUS ON FELLOWS

# Teacher Appreciation Transformed to Inspiration



*AAE Foundation Advocacy Fellows have many opportunities to hone their education advocacy skills. This year-long program includes media training, learning how to share educator expertise through testifying before legislators and submitting written testimony, as well as submitting op-eds and letters to the editor for publication in local and national news media outlets. Engagement with the general public also includes using one's educator voice to discuss where the inspiration to teach comes from and the unexpected ways in which it changes lives. Here is AAEF Fellow Joan Walden's reflection on inspiration.*

I recently did an unscientific, unsolicited survey of my seven-year-old students, to find out what they want to be when they grow up.

Top five responses in 2022 were:

1. Youtuber
2. Veterinarian
3. Teacher
4. Mother
5. Paleontologist

This is something I do yearly. If my memory serves me, teaching has maintained its top five status for nine years without fail. These top five picks are a snapshot of a second-grade world view. They dream big, they are relational, and they love dinosaurs. It is as simple as that. Yet it points to the teacher's opportunity to make a difference. It is appreciation transformed to inspiration.

Teacher Appreciation Week is the first week of May. Who is the genius who designated the first week of May for this honor? Supposedly, it was a parent-teacher organization in the 1980s. It was someone who had the foresight to consider the ebb and flow of a 180-day school year. They understood the best laid plans, the goal setting, the victories, and the uphill battles.

They understood how hard we are fighting to prepare our students for the next grade level. They understood the emotional shifts from panic to elation as we look ahead to the transfer of our students to the next grade level in less than twenty-five days.

Teacher Appreciation Week is by no means the only time I feel appreciated, yet it is intentional, and it reminds me



Teacher Appreciation Week is by no means the only time I feel appreciated, yet it is intentional, and it reminds me of how thankful I am to be in this role.

of how thankful I am to be in this role. It is a time to be appreciated, and to be thankful I am a teacher.

At the very least, Teacher Appreciation Week is an opportunity to reflect upon a teacher who made a difference in our lives. My dad was a teacher. He came to teaching through a nontraditional path. While attending night school on the GI Bill, my dad taught fifth grade, and coached football in our neighborhood Catholic school. Before attaining his teaching degree, he moved to



public school where he coached, and taught seventh- and eighth-grade social studies and history.

In fact, I fondly remember my father's college graduation date. I was seven. That was a great family celebration. Teaching was rewarding for my dad. Teaching was also very difficult for him. The things that are edifying about teaching now, were edifying back then. The things that are overwhelming now, were overwhelming back then. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

I remember May as being a difficult month in the school year for my dad. We as a family knew to give him a wide berth in May. Students were emotionally done, yet the year wasn't over. There was a direct correlation between the number of squirt guns confiscated, and my dad's state of mind. May was the tipping point for finishing well, or just finishing upright.

It was, more often than not, the point when he asked, "Why? Why am I doing this?" *It is the ebb and flow of the 180-day year.*

Even though my dad worked many summers to make ends meet, the summer work was different from teaching. It didn't require the mental or emotional

bandwidth of teaching. The summer was a time of repair and refreshment. It enabled him to begin again, with new plans, and new hope.

He taught for thirty years.

At my dad's funeral, many former students shared stories about my dad's impact on their life. One student in particular shared how my dad supported him during a challenging time in his life. He was struggling academically, and he was close to having to quit football. My dad tutored him. The student became a teacher. This is appreciation transformed into inspiration.

There's the answer to Dad's question!...That is why he did it, *and why I do it today.*

The more things change, the more they stay the same. ■

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Joan Walden is a teacher in Hamilton County, Indiana. Working with and advocating for students and their families is what she values most. Joan works closely with families to ensure a viable home/school connection, and to better know and serve her students. Joan serves as a coach for Girls on the Run, Inc. Joan is a 2022 Association of American Educators Foundation fellow.



# Did You Know AAE Offers a JOBS BANK?

The past few years have been tumultuous for everyone in education, leaving many to reconsider their current positions. We've heard from many members who will be looking for a new environment in which to teach next year, move to a different position, or even relocate. We have also heard from administrators searching to fill key positions before the start of the new academic year. With so many educators changing positions, we anticipate this could be one of the busiest hiring seasons we have seen in years. Job seekers and job posters have an incredible resource at their fingertips.

## Job Seekers

As a professional, you know that any job search is only as good as the listings you find. Are the listings current? Are the descriptions trustworthy? Do you have to pay a fee, or an additional fee, to see the "best" positions? As an AAE member, you have access to one of the nation's best educator-only job banks.

Whether you are a long-time member exploring your next opportunity or a student member looking for that first position to launch your career, you should check our job listings as a great place to start. With hundreds of up-to-date positions in hundreds of locations nationwide, and new positions posted each week, the AAE Jobs Bank is a robust resource that is here to help you in your search. And it is a free benefit to our members.

## Job Posters

Administrators, HR professionals, and school business managers: As a staff person responsible for hiring new teachers, specialists, and support personnel, there probably is not a school in your town or district that does not have multiple openings now and for the new school year. You may know of a position that is a perfect fit for one of our members. We invite you to post position openings on the AAE Jobs Bank ([www.aaeteachers.org/jobsbank](http://www.aaeteachers.org/jobsbank)).

Our listings are absolutely free for schools and districts to post positions and they are free for our members to access. Our online form makes it fast and easy for districts themselves to add positions. For schools or districts that have a large number of listings, email us and we will work with you to make sure your position listings get in front of all of our members.

We encourage you to share this link, [www.aaeteachers.org/jobsbank](http://www.aaeteachers.org/jobsbank), with hiring colleagues who have positions to post. Posting positions does not require AAE membership. We are available to answer any questions you may have regarding our Jobs Bank and look forward to assisting you. ■

JOB SEARCH



# AAEF Classroom Grant Winner Uncovers a Wealth of Artistic Talent in Her Students



**B**rittany Whisnant applied for her first-ever classroom grant and was awarded \$500 for what turned out to be an extraordinary artistic and cultural learning journey for both her and her students.

Brittany states,

*"I am the art teacher at an arts-infused school called SAIL, or School for Arts Infused Learning. Arts infusion is a teaching technique in which one of our encore classes is infused with math, English language arts, science, or social studies. It helps students remember the information taught to them and makes learning fun and interesting. We are always trying out-of-the-box thinking for higher learning.*

*This year I received a grant from the AAE that has helped me provide that higher learning experience for my students. In my art room, I have to meet Georgia art standards, but that does not keep me from infusing other subjects like social studies and culture into my lessons. This year, for one of my middle school classes, I decided to focus on the culture of Japan. Japanese culture is something many of my middle school students have an interest in since they like anime, video games, and movies from the Land of the Rising Sun. This class has given them a deeper*

*understanding of folklore and references. Comparing and contrasting our own culture to theirs helps with deeper thinking, as well.*

*We started with a timeline of Japan split into periods. At the beginning of each project, a picture example is put above the corresponding time period to show how old the technique is and to serve as a reminder of each project. With this grant, we have been able to do watercolor haikus and kimonos, masking paper technique with the story of "The Rabbit in the Moon," drawing yokai (monsters), paper mache sushi, kitsune masks, kintsugi bowls, ceramic koi fish and Japanese neko (cats), and Japanese stamp making. Next semester, we will be trying our hand at shibori dyeing, sewing simple felt Japanese crests, and ikebana, or Japanese flower arranging.*

*Through the projects, I have had students make connections to the material. Connections include how Tom Nook from the popular Animal Crossing games is actually a tanooki, a yokai, or how sushi in its raw form is actually a modern food much different from its predecessor. I hope this class makes my students more interested in other cultures around the world as well as in more advanced techniques in visual art that they will always remember!" ■*

# A Diverse Educator Pipeline

In a profession that is estimated to have served nearly fifty million children in the past year alone, it is evident that every learning environment is growing. At the same time, these learning environments are also growing increasingly diverse. In an effort to meet the needs of a diverse student population with diverse learning needs, we must ensure that the educators serving this population are well trained and supported, and are representative of the lived and cultural experiences of students. It is time to prioritize a diverse teaching force.

Diversification of the teaching population can address a growing concern of teacher shortages, invites innovation to discussions of teacher certification and licensure, and supports the entire school community through a diversity of thought, coaching, development, and support.

High standards, high accountability, and increased student performance are all priorities surrounding the topic of diversification of the teaching profession. At the Association of American Educators, we believe that increasing teacher diversity elevates the teaching profession and improves the lives and outcomes of all students.

## Reduce Barriers to Teacher Certification

Currently, needless barriers impact the profession's ability to attract new and highly qualified talent to our educator force. The costs associated with licensure, the misalignment of certification exams to real, practical teaching, and the process of certifying educators are known barriers to entry for many aspiring professional educators. An increase in the recruitment of diverse educator candidates could begin by improving the existing structures and policies that exist for aspiring educators to become certified. Here are recommendations toward improvement:

### Certification Process

It is necessary to cultivate, approve, and invest in high-quality pathways to certifying educator candidates. Independently and in partnership with districts and schools prioritizing hiring a diverse base of educators, states should play an active role in the removal of barriers to the current system by setting standards in collaboration with the new and existing programs that are producing the most effective educators year-over-year.

### Certification Exams

The certification exams and assessments need to be reviewed in collaboration with state-identified "Master Educators" representing diverse backgrounds, tenure, and experience. This review could ensure alignment to specific content areas that are updated for the times. It is critical to highlight the information and skills aspiring educators need, and assess them accordingly while holding teacher preparation programs accountable for student achievement.

### Costs Associated With Becoming an Educator

Many aspiring educators are required to provide their own funding for their education. We propose that states introduce needs-based financial support to aspiring educator candidates to offset the financial barriers preventing high-quality educators from entering the workforce, and to ensure approved pathways are affordable and effective. Educator candidates must spend hundreds of dollars in certification and preparation costs alone. The Florida Department of Education has addressed this financial barrier to entry by decreasing testing costs for aspiring educators by nearly 70 percent<sup>1</sup> in some instances.

<sup>1</sup> <https://bit.ly/3l1BSgk>

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## Making Teaching More Attractive

In addition to eliminating barriers for aspiring educators, there are areas in which decision makers can actively **prioritize attracting and hiring diverse teacher candidates by making the education field at large more attractive.** Through hiring policies, retention practices, and pathways to leadership, we urge state, district, and school leaders to consider the following:

### Invest in Colleges of Education

Colleges of education are a critical producer of talent in the educator pipeline. With funding approved by states. Leaders should be incentivizing education degrees by offering incentives for multiple degree programs (B.S. and M.S.Ed., M.A.Ed., etc.). States might incentivize education degrees with annual tax deductions, educator grants, loan forgiveness, and increased teacher salaries for state certifications and years served in the state.

### Support For Schools And Districts Implementing Strategic Recruitment Efforts

Prioritizing strategic recruitment with standards and accountability could contribute to increased growth within the teaching profession. States should consider introducing financial support for districts to establish and implement hiring efforts designed to attract a diverse educator base and additional support for districts seeking to diversify their teacher population.

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## Prioritize these efforts with adequate coaching, development, and support for all educators:

**Adopt a statement signaling** to local districts the state's commitment to addressing this issue and to evaluating other recommended education policy changes.

**Support educator mentorship** by introducing grants for educator mentorship, career guidance, and financial assistance programs available to all educators. Equip educators with strong state-level mentorship programs connecting them to a database of outstanding educators who, using state grants, might mentor a small cohort of educators as part of their pathways to leadership development. Education stakeholders in states such as New Jersey<sup>2</sup> have proposed educators of

color mentorship programs that match male educators of color to a district seeking their unique skills, experiences, and perspectives.

**Reward educator performance** through a continued commitment to diversifying a state's group of Outstanding Educators, commit to rewarding educator performance, community involvement, academic achievement, and cultural competence through state recognition, grants, and scholarships.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/3l4sBEp>

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## Educators, Your Voices Are Needed

As professional educators and those most proximal to the daily needs of our students, classrooms, and our schools, your voices are needed. It is growing increasingly paramount that educator voices are central to decision-making, and at the very least, are present at decision-making tables. Many of you have contacted us with incredible ideas and have volunteered to participate in advocacy actions such as writing opinion editorials, contacting your local legislators, or creating video content. We invite you to explore all of the opportunities AAE has available to uplift your voices. Participate in our surveys, share your school success stories, celebrate

your colleagues, and most importantly, get trained to act when the opportunity comes available. You can access AAE's advocacy training sessions through our Professional Development Portal, and look for emails from the advocacy department for monthly training opportunities. ■



**Kira Tookes** is the director of advocacy for AAE Foundation. In this role, Kira is responsible for recruiting, training, developing, and empowering teachers to make strategic and impactful policy advancements for the benefit of all children.

# Dealing with Violent Students— How Much is Too Much?

**E**ducators deal with all kinds of students and personalities. While classroom training includes considerable classroom management techniques and tools, less information is available about actions to take when a student hurts you.

There is no easy way to discuss this topic. Violence in the classroom is on the rise and violence perpetrated against educators has grown exponentially over the years. Some are intentional acts of violence. Other students may kick, hit, or punch due to a disability. Regardless of the situation, educators should be protected. Working each day fearful of injury is not acceptable and you deserve better.

Special Education (SPED) teachers are those who most often find themselves victims of violence in the classroom. Students in SPED programs require varying approaches depending on their challenges, needs, age, and other factors. A violent first-grade student who attacks you will most likely inflict fewer severe injuries than a high school student engaging in the same behavior. Make sure, when dealing with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) student who is routinely violent, that you work closely with the SPED team when taking action.

Violence toward teachers, however, is not unique to the SPED classroom, and many general education teachers report an increase in violence in the classroom. General education students also engage in hitting, kicking, and other aggressive acts and those actions are usually intentional.

Regardless of the type of classroom in which you teach, the following steps should be followed when dealing with violent students:

1. Seek immediate medical attention for any injuries, visible or otherwise.
2. Keep documentation of all medical attention received.
3. Check and follow school policy for documenting the incident. If there are not predrafted forms or a specific procedure, promptly send an email to your supervisor and administration noting the date, time, and facts of the incident.
4. Documentation of injuries should be maintained. This includes photographs, a diary for emotional/mental injuries, and treatment records.
5. For repeated occurrences with the same student, keep a log. Make the log as factual as possible, noting the date, time, and circumstances of each violent interaction. List all witnesses to the incident.
6. If the student poses a substantial threat, ask that the student be removed from your classroom. For those students with an IEP, this may take time and require the student's team to reconvene, particularly if a manifestation determination must be made.
7. File a worker's compensation claim for each and every injury that warrants medical treatment.
8. In certain situations, it is appropriate to file a police report. This depends in large part on the age of the student and any disabilities or challenges facing the student.
9. Work with your administration to develop a plan. In situations in which administration or your district is unresponsive, contact AAE Legal Services. You are not alone.

If you have been subjected to a student-perpetrated injury in the classroom, we are here to help and will support you in any way we are able. For all that you do on behalf of students and families every day, we thank you. ■

## HOW TO CONTACT LEGAL SERVICES

**PHONE:** 1-800-704-7799

**EMAIL:** [contactlegal@aaeteachers.org](mailto:contactlegal@aaeteachers.org)

### ONLINE:

1. Log into the secure AAE Member Portal: [www.myaae.org/s/login](http://www.myaae.org/s/login)
2. Click "Submit Legal Contact Form" on the left side
3. Select the form for your membership type and chapter
4. Complete and submit the legal contact form and the Legal Services Department will respond promptly



**Sharon Nelson** is the senior director of legal services for the Association of American Educators. In this capacity, Ms. Nelson oversees AAE's legal services team and works daily with members and panel counsel to address members' legal concerns. A passionate advocate for educators, Ms. Nelson has been a lawyer focusing on employee rights issues for more than twenty years.



# The Effect of the Pandemic on Teacher Morale

Educators feel it and the news has been reporting on it. Teacher morale is at an all-time low.

After a brief period of being lauded as heroes by parents attempting to teach their children at home during the pandemic, COVID-19 has brought wave after wave of stressors to educators across the country. These include yo-yoing between different teaching styles, the impossible demands of hybrid or synchronous learning, dealing with their own health, and the cascading effects of student learning loss.

Recently, the New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative surveyed 454 charter school educators to look more closely at what was contributing to teachers' stress and what can be done about it. The study surveyed educators twice, once at the end of the 2020 school year and then again one year later. Their initial paper only releases the findings about what teachers were experiencing, but they plan to release another report that will focus on teacher retention.

## What the Research Says

The research confirmed that educators were experiencing high levels of emotional distress. Thirty-six percent of educators screened positive for anxiety, while thirty-five percent showed signs of depression. These rates are higher than what was observed in both the general population and in health care workers over the same period of time. Additionally, nineteen percent of educators screened positive for PTSD associated with the effects of the pandemic.

The surveys asked educators to rate how highly a different stressor affected them. The most significant stressor for educators was dealing with the challenges of learning loss, with the challenges of teaching in a hybrid environment as a close second. Other significant stressors were the lack of impact on students, technical difficulties, additional work hours, and test-related accountability measures.

**36%** of educators screened positive for anxiety

**35%** of educators showed signs of depression

**19%** of educators screened positive for PTSD associated with the effects of the pandemic

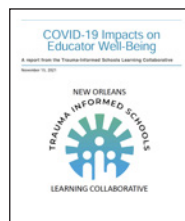
All educators were negatively impacted by all of the stressors associated with COVID-19, but different groups of educators found different stressors to have more impact. For example, Black educators were more impacted by having to deal with the health issues of a loved one than were their white colleagues.

### How to Use This Information

If you are an educator who is experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, or PTSD, please seek help. Districts can make this easier for educators by providing access to mental health services. Whether the district provides them, educators affected negatively over the past couple of years should seek out counseling.

All educators can help grow their personal resilience to traumatic events by spending time with family and friends, focusing on positive personal attributes, setting realistic work-life balance goals, and by practicing self-care routines. School leaders should help school staff by focusing on the positive impacts educators are having on their students and by making sure workloads allow for educators to spend time with family and on activities outside of school.

Educators who believe themselves to be in good mental health should still be aware that their colleagues may be struggling. They may find themselves in a good position to help their colleagues through a rough time in their lives. AAE has been working with PsychHub to develop a course just for that purpose. This course is designed to help educators recognize signs of mental distress in their colleagues and prepares them to step in and provide the help their colleagues need in that situation. ■



**Read More:** COVID-19 Impacts on Educator Well-Being  
<https://bit.ly/3wfUmyR>



**Melissa Pratt** is AAE's director of professional learning. She is responsible for creating and managing programs that help AAE members increase their professional capacity. Prior to AAE, Melissa taught science and social studies to middle school students in both public and private schools.



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# Educator Expense Deduction

In this issue, we are highlighting the Educator Expense Deduction and how AAE is advocating to ensure that the deduction works best for educators.

The Educator Expense Deduction allows K-12 educators, including teachers, instructors, counselors, principals, and aides, to deduct qualified expenses from their federal income tax, including professional development courses, books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), and supplementary materials used in the classroom. In 2020, the deduction was expanded to include personal protective equipment (including face masks), hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and other supplies used to prevent the spread of COVID.

Under the current deduction, eligible educators can deduct up to \$300 beginning in the 2022 tax year, or \$600 if married filing jointly and both spouses are eligible educators. Most educators who take the full deduction can save an estimated \$55.

For additional information on how to claim the deduction, visit [IRS.gov/taxtopics/tc458](https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458).

Although current law allows educators to deduct \$300 of unreimbursed classroom expenses, AAE is advocating to increase the Educator Expense Deduction cap from \$300 to \$1,000, and to permit up to \$400 of home internet expenses to be included as a qualifying expense.

According to recent survey data from the National Center of Education Statistics, fifty-six percent of teachers spend more than \$250 of their own money on classroom supplies.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the average teacher spends around \$500 every year purchasing school supplies, food, cleaning supplies, arts and crafts, and simple necessities such as tissues and hand sanitizer for their classrooms.

The average teacher spends around  
**\$500 every year**  
purchasing supplies

A 2016 survey by Scholastic revealed that teachers in high-poverty schools spend even more on average, around \$672.<sup>2</sup> Principals' annual purchases are even above that, exceeding \$1,000 in high-poverty schools. Leann Wagerle, an AAE member and middle school math teacher from Grants Pass, Oregon, spends hundreds of dollars on toothbrushes, deodorant, shoe-repair kits, and other necessities for her students who are homeless or living in poverty.

Another AAE member, Belinda Cundiff, an elementary school teacher from Climax Springs, Missouri, has been

<sup>1</sup> <https://bit.ly/3vVGrzb>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/3wiqv9f>

## COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Are you currently taking the Educator Expense deduction or participating in the PSLF program? Share your thoughts on these and other education-related policies. Email [editor@aaeteachers.org](mailto:editor@aaeteachers.org).



teaching for twenty-nine years and typically spends more than \$1,000 to provide books, snacks, and other classroom supplies for her students.

Teachers such as Belinda and Leann exemplify the commitment our educators have to their students, and illustrate why this increase is sorely needed.

According to the National Center of Education Statistics survey, ninety-four percent of public school teachers report spending their own money to cover classroom expenses, filling gaps in needed supplies and technology to meet their students' learning goals.<sup>3</sup> About 3.7 million educators nationwide take the Educator Expense Deduction.

## 3.7 million educators nationwide take the Educator Expense Deduction

Increasing the Educator Expense Deduction to \$1,000 would nearly quadruple the amount educators can save, which is currently an estimated \$55 for most educators taking the full deduction. The current program returns an estimated \$200 million to educators' pockets, but if fully implemented and used by educators, this change would save America's educators between \$500 and \$800 million on their federal income taxes. By comparison, the federal government spends approximately \$79 billion each year on education programs.

For more information on AAE's efforts to increase the deduction, or to share your story of spending more than the \$250 cap on classroom expenses in one year, email Noelani Kahapea at [noelani@aaeteachers.org](mailto:noelani@aaeteachers.org).

For additional information on how to claim the deduction, visit [IRS.gov/taxtopics/tc458](https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458).

### Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program Limited Time Waiver

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program allows certain educators to receive student loan forgiveness on Federal Direct Loans after making 120 full, on-time monthly payments through an income-driven repayment plan while working for a qualified employer (either a government organization or a not-for-profit organization).

In October 2021, the U.S. Department of Education announced a limited-time waiver that allows borrowers to receive credit for certain past payments that normally would not qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Prior to this waiver, only full, on-time payments made on a Direct Loan under an income-driven repayment plan would qualify toward the 120 payments.

Under the new limited-time waiver, educators may receive credit for payments that meet the following criteria, as long as they consolidate their loans into a Direct Consolidation Loan by the waiver's expiration date:

- Payments made on loans through the Perkins Loan Program, the Federal Family Education Loan Program, and other types of federal student loans. Repayment of parent PLUS loans do not qualify for the waiver.
- Payments made under any repayment plan, instead of only under the Standard or Income-Driven repayment plans.
- Late payments or payments for less than the full amount due.
- Any of these payments may be made prior to consolidation, as long as consolidation occurs prior to the waiver's expiration.

Additionally, until the waiver's expiration, educators do not need to be employed by a qualified employer at the time of application and forgiveness. Finally, teachers receiving loan forgiveness through the Teacher Loan Forgiveness program may also count the period leading up to their eligibility towards PSLF.

To qualify for the waiver, borrowers must consolidate their loans into the Direct Consolidation Loan program and submit a waiver form by October 31, 2022.

For more information on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, the limited-time waiver, and how to apply, visit [studentaid.gov/pslf](https://studentaid.gov/pslf). ■



**Noelani Kahapea** serves as the director of policy and strategic partnerships for the Association of American Educators. Prior to joining AAE, Noelani served as the Senior Policy Staff on education and labor policy for the Republican Study Committee in the House of Representatives.

3 <https://bit.ly/3vVGrzb>


# New PD Portal Offering

**E**ven before the pandemic, teaching was a particularly stressful job. The past few years' increased demands and unexpected shifts have heightened that stress to an all-new level. You likely feel the results of this acutely.

Stress is our body's response to a threat in our environment. When we encounter something that can harm us, our body floods with hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. Our blood pressure and heart rate increase as our body prepares to deal with the threat. Only the removal of the threat can begin the process of returning to normal.

In prehistoric times, where the threat might be a wild animal or facing other dangers on our own, this response is helpful. It can even be helpful in modern times, where the stress response can help us push through deadlines or handle traumatic events. However, when the stress continues for extended periods of time, unabated, that is when the issues can occur.

People who remain stressed for extended periods are more likely to have heart issues, or to become ill. In many cases, they can develop anxiety and, if the stress isn't dealt with for long enough, they can experience burnout.

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a headset, is sitting at a desk. He is looking down at a notebook and holding a pen, appearing to be in a focused work or study environment. The background is softly blurred, showing what looks like a window and some indoor plants.

Visit [pd.aeteachers.org](https://pd.aeteachers.org)  
to sign up for the  
teacher stress course

As an educator, stress can also affect your job. You may find yourself more reliant on authoritarian discipline styles and less able to connect with colleagues and students. You may not be as prepared in the past and find that you're taking more sick days. These are all documented results of teacher stress in the classroom.

The good news is that it does not have to be this way. The only sure way to end stress is to remove the situation causing the stress, but it is possible to lessen the magnitude of response you have in response to stress.

You have likely heard of self-care as a component in this. Self-care is very important and without it, stress is likely to have a more magnified effect; however, self-care is often misunderstood or presented as an easy cure-all.

In our new self-guided course on teacher stress available on the AAE Professional Development Portal, we not only put an emphasis on self-care as a vital component to managing stress but also put self-care in its proper context and talk about the other steps you can take to manage the stress you undergo daily. ■



# AAEF and Our Members GIVING BACK



Thank you to all the members who voted for the fifth charity as part of our annual AAE Foundation Members Give Back program.

**We are pleased to announce this year's member-selected charity is GirlStart.** GirlStart is headquartered in Austin, Texas. Its mission is to increase girls' interest and engagement in STEM through innovative, nationally recognized informal STEM education programs.

More information is available at [girlstart.org](http://girlstart.org)

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# AAE Out and About

