

Independent Teacher Movement Here to Stay

A Word from Our Executive Director—Gary Beckner

This year the AAE is celebrating its tenth anniversary and it has been an “E-Ticket” ride! Those of you who visited Disneyland in the old days will remember that the most thrilling rides required an “E-Ticket” for admission. Indeed, these past ten years have been a roller coaster of ups and downs. Many of the ups will be reflected in the pictures throughout this special edition of *Education Matters*. Most of the downs can be credited to our “competitors,” the NEA and AFT. “Competitors” is their term, not ours. They still don’t seem to understand that the AAE was formed as a professional alternative to unionism, not as an alternative union. Then again, maybe they do! At times we are still surprised at the lengths they will go to try to keep teachers from hearing about the AAE. However, there are signs that it is dawning on them that the AAE is here to stay. John Cameron Swazey’s old television commercial slogan for Timex could sum up the past ten years for the AAE, “Takes a licking and keeps on ticking!”

It might be good at this point to remind you that membership in labor unions is waning. Even the unions’ own internal reports confirm that fact. Conversely, membership in nonunion, independent, professional educator associations is continuing to flourish. I don’t have to tell you why that is. I’m just proud to be a part of this movement and am more optimistic than ever that it will continue to grow dramatically over the next decade.

During the next five years, more new teachers will be entering the profession than over the past twenty due to retiring baby boomers. The AAE is creating a new vision of what a career in teaching can be, which should capture the hearts and minds of this new generation of teachers. In that regard, you will begin to notice some changes at the AAE that are intended to connect with the new millennium teachers. Stay tuned!

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It seems to us that it would be best to get out in front and lead real reform instead of fighting tooth and nail to try to stop the inevitable.

We are excited about what the future holds for the AAE and for public education. It is true that we could have grown even faster if we had taken the safe route of trying to protect the status quo, as the unions have. However, educators cannot continue to stick their collective heads in the sand and hope the problem of low public esteem for our public education system will just go away. Reform initiatives suggest charter schools, alternative certification, merit pay, and competency testing, are not going away. They, too, are here to stay. The public wants them, and the new millennium teachers aren’t afraid of them. It seems to us that it would be best to get out in front and lead real reform instead of fighting tooth and nail to try to stop the inevitable. Working with the leaders of the reform movement to ensure that our members’ concerns and views are not only considered but also adopted, makes much more sense and will better serve America’s teachers and children.

Be sure to read the new member survey opinions on pages 5 and 6. The comments from active classroom teachers underscore the fact that the major problems in our public education system have not changed much over the past ten years. The defenders of the status quo keep insisting that more money (much more money) is the answer to all of our problems. That seems to make sense and, certainly, we must find ways to increase funding to repair or replace decaying school buildings; buy more books, computers, and supplies; and increase teachers’ pay. However, it is also a deceptively self-serving answer. Until the entire public education system is turned upside down, so that new funding can actually get to the classroom and not be soaked up by bureaucracy, more money could actually exacerbate many of our problems. It is an economic reality that the more we subsidize something, the more of that something we get. Our major problems are systemic problems. That is where external pressure from some of the more controversial “out of the box” reform initiatives could help and should be given a shot. Charter schools, as an example, could show us the way toward eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and give teachers the freedom they need to teach.

Over the next ten years, we will do all we can to return our public school system to what was once its unquestionable status as the world’s best. America’s children deserve nothing less.

I hope you enjoy this pictorial anniversary edition. It is a depiction of our personal efforts to serve you—the members of the Association of American Educators. **EM**

*Tenth Anniversary
Pictorial Edition 1994-2004*



Charter member Cheryl Andersen is congratulated by members of AAE home office staff: (left to right) Bobette Craycraft, Kelley Autry, Cheryl Andersen, and Sandra Huntsman. Cheryl was the very first teacher to join the AAE and is celebrating our tenth year with us!

AAE at Work across the States!



Professional Educators of Iowa Director Jim Hawkins and wife, Judy, with President elect George W. Bush at a "Meet the Candidates" forum hosted by PEI.



Professional Educators of Tennessee (PET) staff members at state conference. Left to right—Executive Director Walter Jewell, Insurance Administrator Alissa Schutz, Gov't. Relations Director William Gemmill, President Billie Hamilton, and Director of Legal Services Larry Crain.



Pieterke Beckner, AAE home office administrator, on the left, and AAE Foundation Board member Becky Norton Dunlop at Becky's office in Washington, D.C. Becky is the vice president for External Relations at the Heritage Foundation.



The late Steve Allen (center), guest speaker at a PEI-sponsored character education conference in Iowa. Left to right—Billie Ray, Jim Hawkins, Steve Allen, Judy Hawkins, and former Iowa Governor Robert Ray.



Gary Beckner presenting retired Congressman William Goodling, former chair of House Education and the Workforce Committee, an award at a Keystone Teachers Association conference in Pennsylvania.



Pictured with former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige are Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators (APOE), Darryl Hatcher and Betty Minton. The two APOE state leaders were invited by Secretary Paige to attend the Research-to-Practice Summit in D.C.



Left to right—Louisiana Governor Mike Foster, APEL President Marcia Koopmann, State Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard, and Gary Beckner at an Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana conference.

Doug Barnett (left) and Vince Snowbarger making a presentation at a school in Kansas. Doug is the president of the Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE); Vince is a former U.S. Congressman.



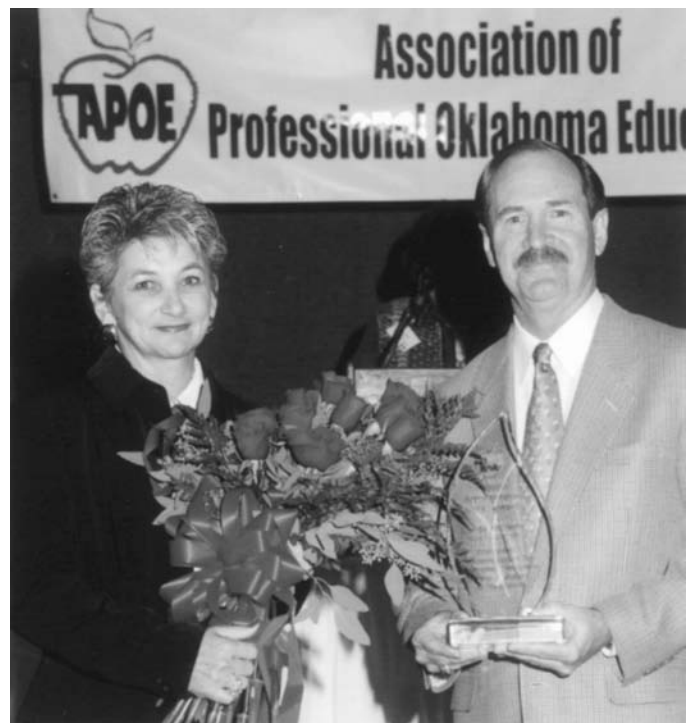
Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, keynote speaker at an Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators' (APOE) annual conference.



Audience at APOE's first annual conference addressed by Governor Keating.



John Szewczyk of Virginia Professional Educators (VPE) and Karen Norton, executive director of Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA), driving a point home at AAE conference in Berea, KY.



APOE Principal of the Year Award presented to Lynda McDaniel by Gary Beckner.

From Coast to Coast!



The AAE services our membership from our California office, our new Alexandria, VA office, and from eleven state affiliate offices in between.

The AAE home office is located in the Alicia Office complex in Laguna Hills, California.



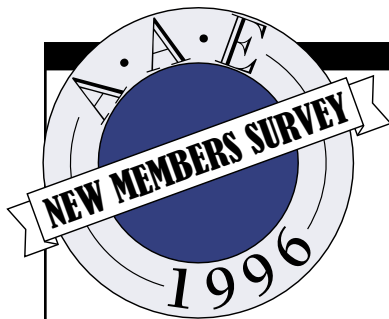
Tracey Bailey (AAE Director of National Projects) and Anna Nagel (AAE Education Research Associate) at the D.C. office.



Our new office in the Washington, D.C. area.



Karen Norton (2002 Arkansas State Teacher of the Year), the new director of Arkansas State Teachers Association, and Kristen Boswell, ASTA Office Manager, opening our newest state office in Little Rock, AR.



1996 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

As the AAE continues to grow, we hear from our new members all across the country who respond on their new member questionnaire.

Below were some typical responses from the new member questionnaires collected in 1996. If you compare them with the responses on the next page, which were collected from new members in 2004, you'll see that not much has changed. It is interesting how consistent your concerns are. It also underscores how much work we have to do to improve our public education system.

What Educational Issues Most Concern You?

- *Unspecified and unmeasurable standards; inability of students to write effectively and formally (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.); ridiculously lenient school discipline.*
—Secondary Substitute Teacher, Lancaster, PA
- *Maintaining high standards while the job description keeps growing with non-educational issues.*
—8th Grade Math Teacher, Nashua, NH
- *Education has become so political. There is too much emphasis placed on the ideas of special interest groups.*
—5th Grade Teacher, Glencoe, AL
- *Lack of funding. Too little money gets to the classroom!*
—9-12th Grade Theater Arts Teacher, Wetmore, KS
- *Untested, unproven ideas (like new math).*
—9-12th Grade Algebra & Trig. Teacher, Portorville, CA
- *Concerned about federal intrusion into local decisions.*
—High School Principal, Nashville, TN
- *Weak teacher certification process.*
—Education Professor, Boulder, CO
- *One word—Bureaucracy! Must break it up to get money and freedom to teach in our classrooms.*
—7th Grade Reading, Omaha, NE

- *Expect schools to take over parents' role (breakfast, lunches, before school programs, after school programs, sex education, etc.)*
—4th Grade Teacher, Ephrata, WA

What's Right with Public Education?

The **many dedicated, caring teachers in the system** was the answer on a super majority of surveys. Some additional comments about what's right with public education follow.

- *Public education provides, for many, the only stability in children's lives: rules, duties, lunch, etc....*
—K-3rd Grade Teacher, Huntsville, AL
- *Teaching children how to socialize with others.*
—9-12th Grade Counselor, Midlothian, VA
- *Caring teachers! Most teachers I know spend their own money to go beyond the call of duty to help their students.*
—K-3rd Title I & At Risk, Lawrence, KS

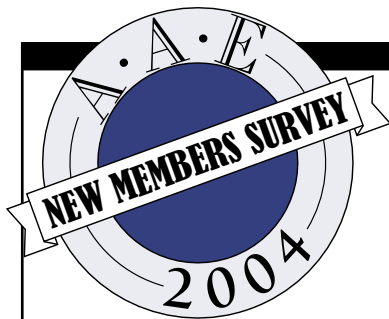
What's Wrong with Public Education Today?

- *Things are permissible in school today that would have led to a suspension 10 years ago.*
—K-4th Grade Teacher, Elkhart, IA
- *No clearly defined standards for each grade level. Too many students pass to next grade even though they're not reading.*
—Middle School Teacher, San Francisco, CA
- *Too much paperwork and government forms—takes away time from lesson preparation!*
—K-4th Speech Therapist, Tahlequah, OK
- *Teachers have been suckered into thinking we have to use political action to help us get what we need to teach. We're spending too much time and money (dues) on politics and on stuff which has nothing to do with education.*
—12th Grade Teacher, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- *Class sizes too large!*
—8th Grade English Teacher, Post Falls, ID
- *Too many new fads instead of sticking to programs we know work.*
—K-6th Grade Teacher, Lexington, KY
- *Too many administrators—not enough teachers in the system.*
—6th Grade Teacher, Coconut Creek, FL
- *Lack of national standards and measurements, plus lack of accountability for teachers and schools.*
—College Education Professor, Ithica, NY

What Can Be Done to Correct the Problem?

A majority of respondents felt that allowing local communities to solve their own problems—teachers and parents working together (without meddlesome “advice” from state and federal bureaucrats)—would bring about the reform we're all hoping for. Other typical responses included:

- *Reinstate ability grouping for higher academic success; stop labeling so many children with special learning disabilities.*
—5th Grade Teacher, Glen Burnie, MD
- *Public schools must have the same ability as private schools do to get rid of trouble-makers and deadheads (both students and some teachers)!*
—10th Grade Science Teacher, Reno, NV
- *More teacher mentorship programs for new teachers.*
—11-12th Grade American History Teacher, Arlington, VA
- *Merit increases! Although the process would have to minimize politics.*
—9-12th Grade Algebra Teacher, Edmond, OK
- *Open up teaching jobs to other professionals [alternative certification], not just college preps.*
—10-12th Grade Science Teacher, Gentry, AR
- *Certification requirements for teachers must be much higher.*
—Education Department Professor, Wheaton, IL
- *“Just say no” to all the silly untested fads sent down to us from bureaucrats who haven't been in a classroom for years, if at all!*
—Elementary Teacher, Williamsburg, KY
- *Invert the pyramid—teachers should be getting the top pay rather than administrators and bureaucrats. Even union reps make more than we do!*
—Secondary Math Teacher, E. Orange, NJ
- *Every administrator in each district should also teach one class each semester.*
—9-12th Grade Chemistry Teacher, Loveland, CO
- *Get labor unions out of school boards and school policy decision committees, especially curriculum committees. Unions' main concern is for pay and benefits and that's as it should be but they shouldn't dictate educational policy.*
—9-12th Grade English Teacher, Lansing, MI



2004 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

What Educational Issues Most Concern You?

- *No Child Left Behind and the qualifications for teachers to be "highly qualified."*
—6th Grade Elementary Teacher, Hazel Green, AL
- *The new NCLB-Standards—too many tests—not enough time to just teach.*
—1st-6th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Shickley, NE
- *Children who are coming to us in 5th grade are sorely lacking in basic skills. They read on average two years below grade level, cannot write basic sentences, or know multiplication facts, let alone higher addition/subtraction.*
—Middle School Title I Reading Teacher, Monroe, WA
- *Lack of funding for public schools, standardized testing of students (too much—takes away from important classroom instructional time).*
—9th-12th High School English Teacher, Kokomo, IN
- *No Child Left Behind—how realistic is it? Also, parental responsibilities.*
—2nd Grade Elementary School Teacher, Berryton, KS
- *Taking on more of the social/behavioral teaching role while being held "accountable" for test results and standards that are a very long reach for many children dealing with other emotional issues.*
—2nd Grade Elementary School Teacher, Vacaville, CA

What's Right with Public Education?

As with the 1996 new member surveys, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the many dedicated, caring teachers in the system is what's right with public education. Below are some additional comments:

- *Positive attitudes, hard workers, determined spirits. We are what's right—those*

of us who care enough to teach every child regardless of race, religion, IQ, etc.

—5th & 6th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Sparks, NV

- *The educators who are in it for the right reasons. That the government mandates an equal opportunity education for all students.*
—9th Grade Special Ed High School Teacher, Zionsville, IN
- *I see many educators working hard to improve their teaching because they want to see students succeed. I wish there was a proper way to measure things like this. Some teachers earn their paycheck...but many I know receive far less money than they deserve for their tireless efforts in encouraging students to succeed!*
—Middle School Teacher, Chehalis, WA
- *Underpaid, overworked teachers are still out there trying to reach one more student, save one more child, just trying to make a difference.*
—Middle School Math Teacher, Cantonment, FL

What's Wrong with Public Education Today?

- *1) Honesty about student's progress in academics. 2) Increasing amount of tax payers' money being misspent.*
—1st-6th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Carol Stream, IL
- *Becoming driven by "fads." The latest ideas are plunged into as "The Answer" without proper research.*
—5th-8th Middle School Teacher, Chehalis, WA
- *Society's problems of broken families and lack of morals have overflowed into our schools and filled our classrooms.*
—1st-6th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Cantonment, FL
- *Politicians, many who know nothing about education, are creating laws and mandates that we must adhere to. Most have never even been in a classroom and do not bother to get advice from real educators.*
—Elementary School Reading Recovery Teacher, Monticello, AR
- *Classroom decisions are no longer made by the classroom teacher (i.e., curriculum, discipline, evaluation). 2) Curriculum goals are set to maintain mediocrity—not to achieve excellence.*
—High School German, History, and Reading Teacher, Mansfield, OH
- *Teachers are having to do the job of parents before they can even address academics.*

—4th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Macon, MO

- *Political correctness, teachers more concerned with liberal political agenda, children being passed without having met the requirements.*
—6th Grade Middle School Math Teacher, Harper's Ferry, WV
- *Teachers aren't held accountable for their work. Unskilled teachers are not let go. Everything is too political.*
—9th Grade High School Special Ed Teacher, Zionsville, IN

What Can Be Done to Correct the Problem?

- *Empowering teachers to teach and discipline students—including the right to expel disruptive/rude students.*
—9th-11th Grade High School Teacher, Tucson, AZ
- *Improved teacher preparation programs; mandatory, ongoing professional development; restoration of commitment to the ethical principles of public education to provide equal education opportunities; eliminating the influences of political affiliations.*
—Elementary Gifted & Talented Teacher, Midlothian, VA
- *We need to get back to the basics—teaching the Three R's and forgetting the fluff.*
—1st-6th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Monticello, AR
- *Require from teachers more knowledge of the subject matters they "teach." Require from parents more involvement in the educational process.*
—High School Spanish Teacher, Washington, D.C.
- *Let teachers have more of a voice. Let us say what works and what doesn't. Give us time to use a program and get to know it thoroughly before adding more to our plate!*
—5-6th Grade Elementary Teacher, Sparks, NV
- *Teacher training should require a longer period of student teaching that would be similar to an internship (and paid!)*
—1st Grade Elementary School Teacher, Bakersfield, CA
- *Raise teacher education standards and subsequently, teacher salaries. Ability grouping in academic endeavors to provide a stimulating dynamic environment and the challenge of capable peers. I have no idea what to do about parent accountability.*
—4th Grade Elementary School Teacher, Macon, MO

AAE: Your Voice in Washington, D.C.



First AAE Board meeting. Front row, left to right: Tracey Bailey, Pann Baltz, Polly Broussard, and Gary Beckner. Back row, left to right: William Kilpatrick, Tom Fleming, Kevin Ryan, and Eric Buehrer.



Tracey Bailey at USDOE press conference.

The AAE has played a key role in helping to bring about some welcomed changes to NCLB. AAE leaders traveled to a number of states to meet with State Department of Education officials to look for more effective ways to try to implement NCLB without placing undue burdens on teachers. That feedback was accepted by the U.S. Department of Education, and to the Department's credit, we are beginning to see some of the suggested changes taking place.

The AAE was formally commended by both the USDOE and the U.S. House of Representatives. It was publicly acknowledged that instead of stonewalling NCLB (as a number of other teacher organizations have done), the AAE is at least trying to work with the USDOE to make the rules and regulations of NCLB more reasonable. NCLB is, after all, the law of the land. However, there is still much work to do to make the application of NCLB as fair as possible for teachers and school districts. We will continue to work with the Department over the course of the next four years toward that goal. **EM**



Ginger Tinney, executive director of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators (pictured with AAE Director Gary Beckner), receives the Friend of Freedom Award from the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.



First Annual Office Christmas Party.



AAE State Leaders Retreat at Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Conferences and Symposiums



Gary Beckner (on the left), and Guy Doud, Advisory Board member and former National Teacher of the Year—at the Association of California School Administrators Conference in Monterey, California.



AAE Foundation-sponsored public symposium in Kansas to promote support for “Core Knowledge” curricula. Dr. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., president of Core Knowledge Foundation.



Dr. Kevin Ryan, AAE Board member and former director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, teaching at AAE and Link Institute conference on character education at the University of California at Berkeley.



Speakers at another AAE and Link Institute conference in Washington D.C. Standing, left to right: Dr. Constance Jones, Gary Beckner, Peg Murphy. Seated, left to right: Dr. Mary Beth Klee and Dr. William Kilpatrick.



AAE Board member Gene Bedley making a point at Professional Educators of Iowa (PEI) character conference held at Drake University.



Betty Minton, board member of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators, addresses conference sponsored by the Keystone Teachers Association in Harrisburg, PA.

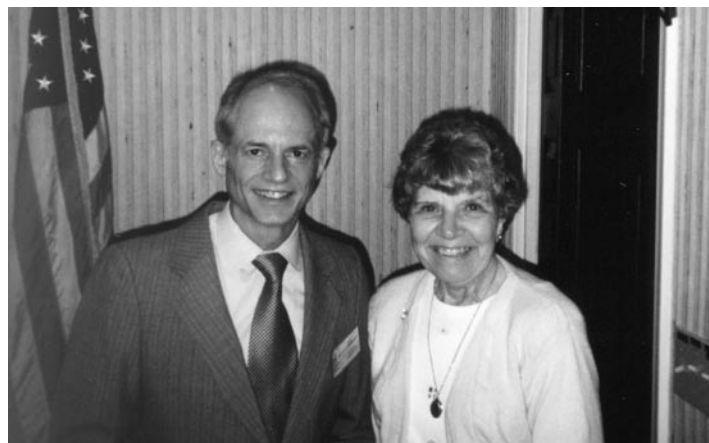


AAE Advisory Board Member Eric Buehrer, President of Gateways to Better Education, addressing audience at annual teachers conference presented by Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, CO.

Congressional, Legislative, and Policy Activities



Patricia Ann “Pann” Baltz, AAE Board member and 1993 Disney Teacher of the Year, testifying before Congress on “Parents, Schools, and Values.”



Ruth Green, executive director of Kentucky Association of Professional Educators (KAPE) and Dr. Michael Poliakoff, director of education programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities at AAE conference in Gettysburg.



Secretary Richard Riley hosts a U.S. Department of Education meeting with Teachers of the Year, including (in the back row) AAE members Steve Levy, Rita Wigfield, and Tom Fleming, and Pann Baltz (seated).



AAE members chosen as panelists for the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) examination process. Pictured left to right: Bertha Zapata, Tampa, FL; Karen Norton, Warren, AR; Karen Stroud, Murfreesboro, TN; Ken Evans, Vancouver, WA; Dr. Kathleen Madigan, President, ABCTE; Retha Nance, Wheatland, OK; Betty Minton, Anadarko, OK; Sandra Crandall, Fountain Valley, CA.



Left to right—Cindy Omlin (director of the Northwest Professional Educators), Gary Beckner, (AAE executive director), Tim Callahan, (director of public relations for Professional Association of Georgia Educators), testifying at Congressional event sponsored by Alexis de Tocqueville Institute.



AAE Advisory Board Member Polly Broussard (pictured in the center) being sworn in as a duly elected member of the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Polly also serves as the executive director of Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana.

It Wasn't All Hard Work!



Tracey Bailey, AAE director of National Projects, leads meeting at Gatlinburg retreat.



A little "blue grass" in the Smokey Mountains, Gatlinburg, TN.

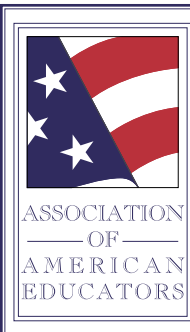
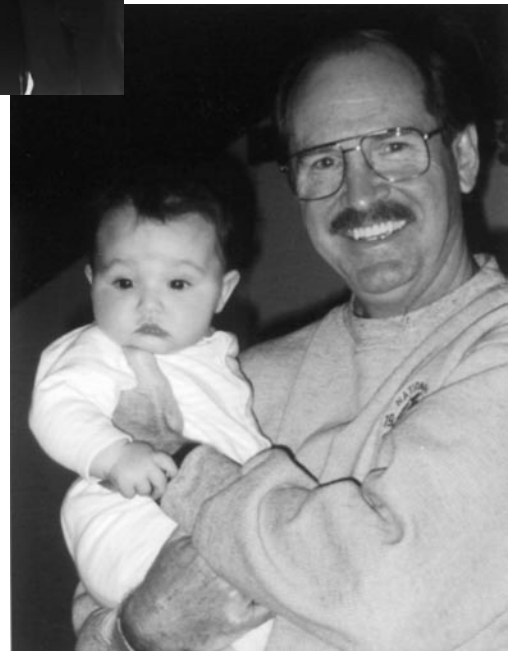


Some AAE state leaders "enjoying" a lecture tour of Gettysburg National Battlefield during an unexpected cold snap in April.



AAE Board member Gene Bedley draws a lot of attention with his teaching techniques! Gene was the 1986 PTA National Educator of the Year.

Looking to the future!
Gary Beckner with future AAE member! Ava is Jim and Judy Hawkins' granddaughter. As a matter of fact, the AAE has a solid future if our staff members' children become teachers. Leading the pack are Tracey and Rosemary Bailey with eight children, and Randy and Karna Hoffman (Board members of Keystone Teachers Association), with six!



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★★ *Advisory Board* ★★

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Patricia Ann Baltz • Gene Bedley
Polly Broussard • Eric Buehrer
Dr. Kevin Ryan • Guy Rice Doud
Thomas A. Fleming • Valerie Anderson Hill
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