

# Teacher Voices: 2013 AAE Membership Survey

## Educator Support Mounts for Commonsense Reform, Choice, and Flexibility

**E**ducation and labor reforms have dominated national headlines for years. While policymakers and reform advocates have been calling for action, teachers have been questioning and implementing policies that affect them in the classroom. An authentic classroom teacher voice is critical in bridging the gap between reform policy and what really works in America's classrooms. The Association of American Educators (AAE) aims to fill this need via our well-informed and experienced base of member educators.

Clearly the education landscape is changing rapidly every year. In 2012 alone, all fifty states passed legislation designed to reform education. This year's membership survey polls our members from all fifty states and paints the picture of a teacher work force overwhelmingly committed to staying in the classroom until retirement (83 percent), utilizing technology in the classroom most of the time (58 percent), and supporting the agenda of polling teachers directly as a means to effect change (99 percent).

Among the topics explored in this membership survey are some of the most pressing issues facing the American

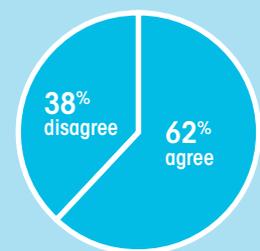


education system, including school choice, technology, Common Core State Standards, transparency in public schools, and pensions and labor policy. While educators have approached these new ideas with caution, overall, AAE members are growing in their support of commonsense reform, local control, new technologies, and transparency and options.

### Raising Expectations

One of the most prominent themes in education reform has been the concept of raising the bar for incoming educators. Recently, both education reform advocates and even high-ranking union officials have suggested that a bar examination for teachers is necessary to improve the quality and status of American teachers. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents agree

with the idea that, just as lawyers must pass state bar exams to practice law, teachers would need to pass a test that proves their knowledge and critical thinking skills to be effective.



Do you agree with a policy that would require new teachers to pass a bar-like examination to teach?



Furthermore, while the union-backed establishment has spent years designing a system that exclusively calls for more dues-paying members, this half-century path has led to the teacher work force rising at twice the rate of student enrollment. Fifty-nine percent of AAE members would support a 1-2 student increase in grades 4-12 class size to make more money available for teacher pay, more technology in the classroom, and other educational programs.

### School Choice Policies

AAE members support certain laws that advance school choice and promote options for all stakeholders. Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents support the Washington, D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) that awards need-based annual scholarships to eligible District children to attend a participating private/parochial D.C. elementary, middle, or high school of their parent's choice. The program has received notable bipartisan support in Congress and is considered one of the most prominent choice systems in the country.

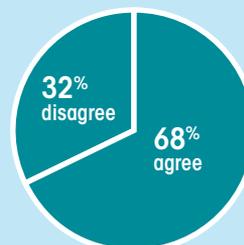
Similarly, in Indiana, AAE members agree with a policy that provides a tax deduction for individuals who make educational expenditures on behalf of their dependent children. Sixty-eight of those surveyed believe any taxpayer who has a child already enrolled in a private/parochial school or who is home-schooled should be eligible to claim up to a \$1,000 tax deduction per child for approved educational expenses, including school tuition, textbooks, fees, software, tutoring, and supplies.

In Arizona, 74 percent of surveyed teachers support the state's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. These ESAs enable parents of special needs children to leave their assigned public schools, taking with them 90 percent of the state dollars that the schools would have received for their children. That money, deposited into ESAs, can then be used to access a multitude of education options that can better met their children's needs.



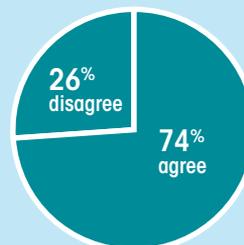
**69% support or tend to support**  
**31% do not support or tend not to support**

The Washington, D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) awards need-based annual scholarships to eligible District children to attend a participating private/parochial D.C. elementary, middle, or high school of their parent's choice. **Do you support this program?**



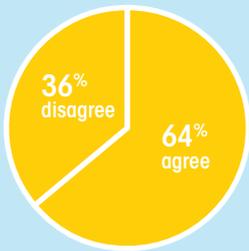
**68% agree or tend to agree**  
**32% do not agree or tend not to agree**

In order to foster a climate for school choice, Indiana provides a tax deduction for individuals who make educational expenditures on behalf of their dependent children. **Do you agree or disagree with this law?**



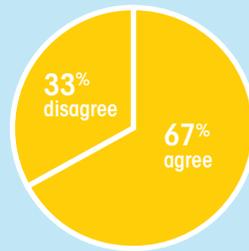
**74% agree or tend to agree**  
**26% disagree or tend to disagree**

In Arizona, Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) enable parents of special needs children to leave their assigned public schools, taking with them 90% of the state dollars that the schools would have received for their children. **Do you agree or disagree with this law?**



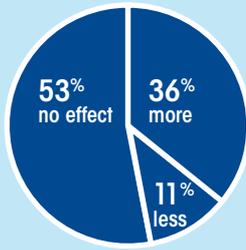
**64% agree or tend to agree**  
**36% disagree or tend to disagree**

State law allows every Florida student access to a part-time to full-time online school, whether it be provided by the Florida Virtual School, a school district, a virtual charter school or an additional provider. **Do you agree or disagree with this policy?**



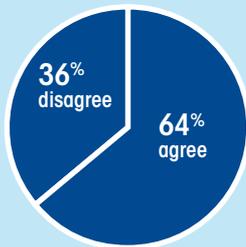
**67% agree or tend to agree**  
**33% disagree or tend to disagree**

Virginia high school students are required to take at least one virtual course to graduate with a standard or advanced diploma. **Do you agree with this policy?**



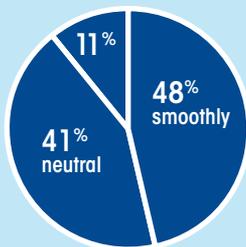
**36% More competitive**  
**11% Less competitive**  
**53% Have no effect**

**Do you believe Common Core State Standards will help make education in the United States more competitive globally, less competitive globally, or have no effect?**



**64% agree or tend to agree**  
**36% disagree or tend to disagree**

Some educators believe that Common Core State Standards would provide more consistency in the quality of education between school districts and between states. **Do you agree with this stance?**



**48% Running smoothly**  
**41% Neutral**  
**11% Poorly**

**How is implementation of the Common Core States Standards moving in your state?**

## Virtual Education and Technology

As new technologies make it possible for students to learn at their own pace, states across the country are implementing polices that offer and encourage online learning. According to the data, 64 percent of AAE member teachers support a Florida law that guarantees access to online course work.

Another 67 percent of survey respondents agree with a Virginia law that requires students to take at least one online course to graduate.

While defenders of the status quo see virtual options as a threat, AAE members embrace new technologies as a means to prepare students for the job market of the twenty-first century.

## Common Core State Standards

One of the most controversial topics in education is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative. While some have argued that CCSS will advance a nationalized education agenda from the Department of Education, others have maintained that a set of rigorous standards will be instrumental in promoting results for students.

According to survey results, 89 percent of those surveyed are already involved with incorporating the Common Core standards into their states or schools.

When asked whether the Common Core State Standards will make the U.S. more competitive on a global scale, just 36 percent of respondents believe they would have this effect. Fifty-three percent of member teachers believe they would have no effect, and 11 percent assert that CCSS will have an adverse effect on global competitiveness.

However, 64 percent of survey respondents believe that Common Core State Standards would provide more consistency in the quality of education between school districts and between states.

Just 48 percent of teachers believe CCSS implementation is running smoothly, while 41 percent of teachers are neutral, and 11 percent believe implementation in their state is going poorly.

Overall, while the jury is still out on the implementation process and its effect on the flexibility of curriculum, AAE members are moving in the direction of support for consistent standards.

# Changes NEXT EXIT

## Transparency and Accountability

To foster a climate of accountability in public schools, educators are calling for a system that promotes transparency in results and funding levels. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents believe that school budgets should be shared with the public as a means to ensure state/federal monies are being allocated effectively. Another 87 percent of teachers believe that school districts should be required to provide an annual fiscal report to the public and district negotiations should be conducted in open public meetings.

Furthermore, 89 percent of teachers surveyed support services such as GreatSchools, that allow stakeholders to search and compare schools in their area. There, parents and educators can compare course offerings, parent reviews, location, and student success rates, among other criteria.

## School Budgets and Pensions

The long-term sustainability of educator pensions has been a hot topic as states and local districts feel the effects of the recession on education budgets. To ensure that educators are compensated fairly and pensions are fully funded, lawmakers are exploring options for educator salaries and benefits.

Sixty-three percent of those surveyed would prefer to negotiate their own contracts so that they can negotiate a salary and benefits package that best suits their lifestyle.

Eighty-seven percent of members would support a future defined-contribution retirement plan for new newly hired teachers. This system would function like the 401k-style plans typical for the private sector, where the employer would make regular, predefined payments into an investment account for the employee throughout the term of employment. Furthermore, another 89 percent support an a la carte benefits plan where prospective hires could pick and choose salaries and benefits based on need.

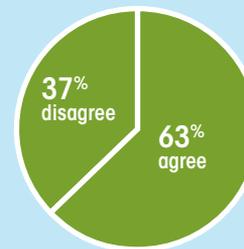
As the profession evolves, and the cry for reform grows louder, teachers are embracing commonsense solutions. AAE is listening and we look forward to sharing your thoughts with policymakers and stakeholders on all levels. ■



89% support or tend to support

11% do not support or tend to not support

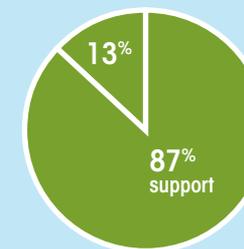
In an effort to engage parents and promote excellent teachers and schools, services such as GreatSchools allow stakeholders to search and compare schools in their area. **Do you support transparency/comparison efforts like GreatSchools?**



63% agree or tend to agree

37% disagree or tend to disagree

"I would prefer to negotiate my own contract so that I can negotiate a salary and benefits package that best suits my lifestyle. For example, as I am unmarried, I would prefer to have a higher salary than have X amount of sick-days." **Do you agree or disagree with this statement?**



87% support or tend to support

13% do not support or tend to not support

**Would you support a future defined-contribution retirement plan for new newly hired teachers?** This would function like the 401k-style plans typical for the private sector.

# AAE Foundation Awards Charter Student Group Service Project Grant

As the events and gifts of the holidays fade into a blur of memories, the most significant moments remain fixed in our minds—a sentimental gift, special time with a loved one, or the joy shown by someone receiving a gift. The members of Students in Action at Carpe Diem Charter High School in Indianapolis have a memory that will last long beyond their new toys and gadgets as recipients of a service project grant from the AAE foundation.

The Students in Action group in Indianapolis is one of 325 groups in thirteen communities across the country. Commissioned in August by history teacher Alyssa Starr, the group gives students an opportunity to make a difference in their communities. While many student service groups have similar goals, most Students in Action members qualify for free or reduced lunch, making it a unique opportunity for internal community change. “If we want to break the cycle of poverty, it has to come within,” said Starr.

Students received the club with overwhelming enthusiasm, each offering

ideas of how to help in their urban community. Ideas started evolving when junior Aaron Griffin suggested feeding the homeless. Through the course of a few hours, excited discussion and a flurry of ideas gave way to the decision of the group feeding the residents at a local women’s shelter, The Julian House, a Thanksgiving meal.

However, the idea did not stop there. After visiting the shelter, the students realized they wanted to be more involved than just serving a meal on Thanksgiving. The students began babysitting the children at the center, while their mothers attend a class on financial literacy. “Working with the kids at The Julian Center and being able to be with them when their parents can’t, almost brings tears to your eyes,” said one sophomore. The student involvement in the center is a beautiful picture of community service, as the children gain role models, and the students at Carpe Diem gain the confidence and joy of being a role model.

After the joy of serving dinner on Thanksgiving, the students wanted to do more. They decided to throw

The Julian Center a Christmas party, complete with gifts for each child, cookie decorating, and music. While the students tried to fundraise, they had expended much of their resources on the Thanksgiving celebration the previous month. “It was beginning to look hopeless,” said Griffin.

Then the Association of American Educators Foundation heard about the endeavor. Inspired by the unique model of breaking poverty from within, the foundation eagerly provided the funds for the students to purchase the necessary Christmas materials, including gifts for the children. Griffin described being presented with the check, saying, “We were so surprised. I was at an all-time high.”

**“If we want to break the cycle of poverty, it has to come from within.”**

**Alyssa Starr, Carpe Diem High School teacher**

Sophomore Mohamdbd Abdelmalik describes how Students in Action has encouraged him to strive even harder academically. “I realize that without education, life closes doors on you.” By helping their community, the members of Students in Action have come to realize just how blessed they are. “Even if you think things are bad, there is always someone in a worse situation,” Griffin mused. The students expressed that the main lesson received from their involvement is just how “much good even a small group of people can do.”

Even when the students at Carpe Diem graduate and move on to college, the memory of the excitement and inspiration received from helping others and working alongside each other will remain with them. The AAE Foundation was honored to help them continue their project. So, long after the holiday season, goodwill towards men remains alive and well in Indianapolis! ■

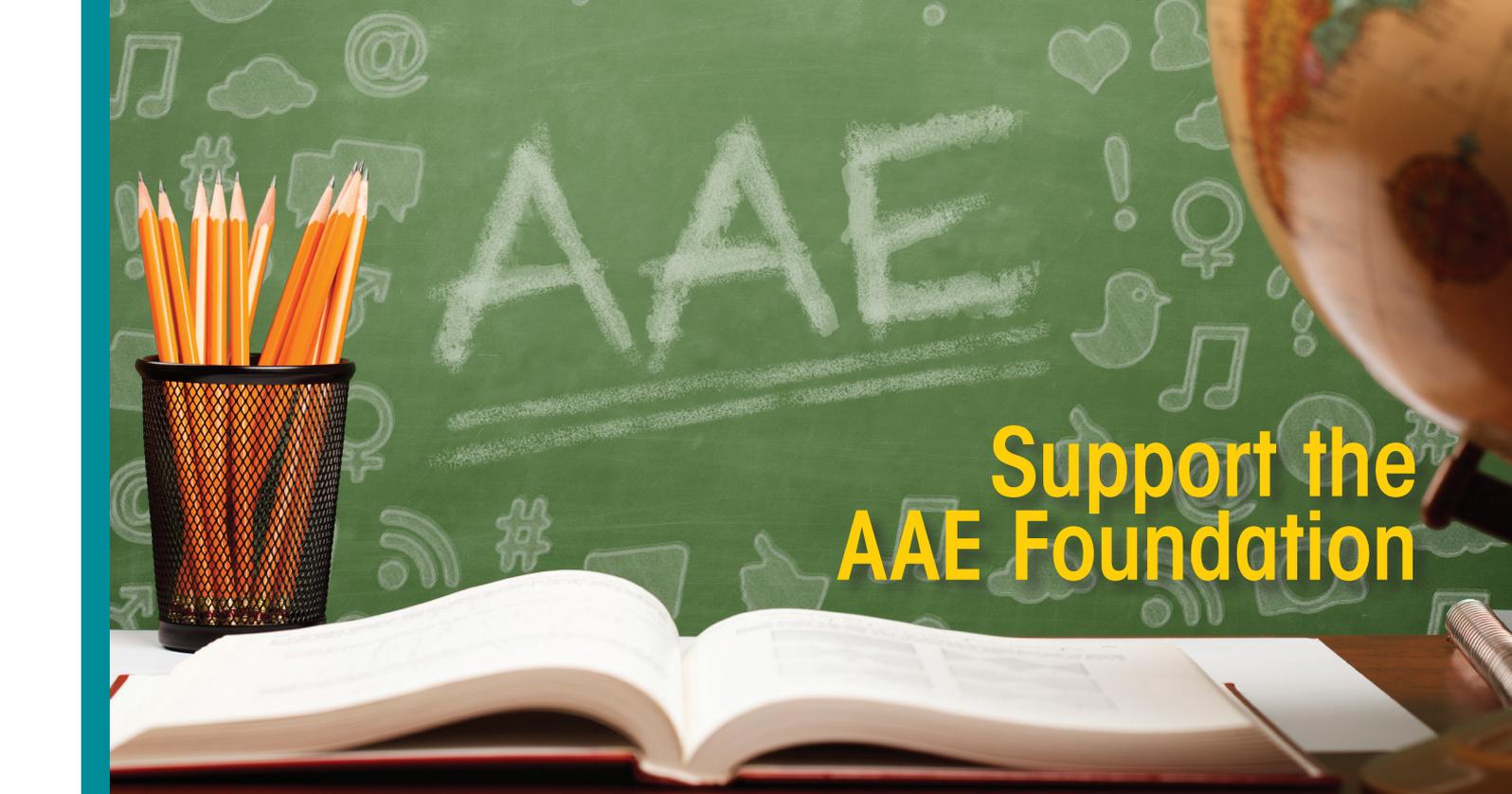


# Members Nationwide Receive Scholarships and Grants

**C**ongratulations to recent Teacher Scholarship and Classroom Grant winners! In 2012 we had a record number of applicants and are excited about the prospects for 2013. We applaud the innovation and commitment that the winners show to their students and to their profession. Phenomenal job!

As a reminder, thanks to all who applied but were not selected to receive a scholarship or grant in this fall competition. The Teacher Scholarship and Classroom Grant competition is held twice a year in the fall and spring. Please consider applying for the next round of scholarships and grants before the March deadlines. Please visit the AAE or state chapter websites for details and applications. ■





# Support the AAE Foundation

The AAE Foundation is helping to reform and improve America's education system. Here are just a few examples of the many ways we are making a difference in the lives of teachers and students nationwide:

- AAE Foundation provides **scholarships and grants** to classroom teachers designed to advance student learning, continue teacher education, and fund **innovative** classroom projects.
- AAE Foundation promotes **professionalism** and engages educators through reform, curriculum, and **leadership** workshops and publications.
- AAE Foundation serves as a **resource** to school boards and school districts on issues pertaining to individual workplace rights and alternative forms of **teacher representation**.



Support your fellow  
educators; donate today!

[aaeteachers.org/foundation](http://aaeteachers.org/foundation)



The Association of American Educators Foundation  
 27405 Puerta Real, Suite 230  
 Mission Viejo, CA 92691-6388

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Gary Beckner, *Executive Editor*  
 Alexandra Schroeck, *Managing Editor*  
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# Assurance Insurance

In addition to \$2,000,000 of liability protection, professional members of the Association of American Educators get access to optional insurance policies at a discount, including:



## ID Theft Assist Protection

AAE has arranged to provide ID theft assist through a partnership between a leading credit bureau and a respected 24/7 crisis response team, providing a comprehensive identity recovery system.

## Term Life

You can request up to \$750,000 of outstanding coverage at special rates for Association members.

## \$1 and \$3 Million Private Practice Professional Liability

This plan is designed to meet the needs of private practice educators who are not directly employed by a school district.

## Disability Income Protection

If you cannot work due to a covered disability, you can receive up to two-thirds of your salary to age 65.

## Personal Auto

Mention your association and you may receive an additional 8 percent discount from GEICO (in most states) on your auto insurance.

## Free Long-term Care Insurance Evaluation Service

You and your loved ones can receive a personalized no-obligation benefit and price comparison of plans from several top-rated insurance companies (for members, parents, and grandparents).

## Accidental Death or Dismemberment

Pays up to \$300,000 for death from any covered accident.

## \$500,000 New Cancer Plan

This plan pays you cash benefits in addition to any other insurance you may have. Your entire family can be covered with individual lifetime benefits of up to \$500,000.

## Comprehensive Health Insurance

You may save hundreds or even thousands of dollars with several major medical options available to you today.

## Pet Insurance

This plan reimburses 80 percent of usual and customary charges for covered procedures at any licensed vet in the U.S. Association members receive an extra 5 percent discount on base plan premiums.

For more information, visit [aaeteachers.org/supplemental](http://aaeteachers.org/supplemental)