

Trending Toward Reform: Teachers Speak on Unions and the Future of the Profession

By Sarah Rosenberg and Elena Silva
with the FDR Group

regularly provides training and opportunities to be a better teacher	36%	53%
saying they are very or somewhat involved in the local union	20%	46%
saying being a union member provides feelings of solidarity, in addition to financial benefits	22%	49%
responsibilities		
saying union in their district currently does each of the following:		
manages teachers through loss and grievance		87%

professional development

Expand the career ladder for teachers by negotiating new and differentiated roles and resp.

Lead efforts to identify ineffective teachers and retrain them

Guide ineffective teachers out of the profession

Percent who strongly or somewhat support district moving in direction of making teachers with schools where any teacher, regardless of seniority, has an equal opportunity to fill a vacancy

Following the 2009 Race to the Top federal grant competition, states that received more than \$4.3 billion, most states moved forward with reforms on key education reforms. Since 2009, for example, Florida, Texas, and the District of Columbia have made changes to their teacher evaluation policy. http://www.nctq.org/pubs/docs/nctq_stateoftheunion.pdf

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, states are providing less funding for students to local school districts this year than last. <http://www.cbpp.org/pressroom/08-11-11/view?id=3569>. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Education Jobs Fund, the federal government provided \$50 billion to states in order to save jobs in education. Nevertheless, the same study shows that by September 2011, local school districts had lost 278,000 jobs nationally compared with 2008.

- MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Pay, and the Economy, March 2012. http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/contributions/foundation/american_teacher_survey/MetLife_Teacher-Survey-2011.pdf
- Four focus groups were conducted in the summer of 2011 in El Paso, Texas; Chicago, Ill.; Los Angeles, Calif.; and Alexandria, Va. (including teachers from the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland).
- Ann Duffett, Steve Farkas, Andrew Rothbaum, and Elena Silva, *Waiting to Be Workover: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and the Future* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2008).
- Quotes are from focus groups conducted as part of this research for this project.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Farkas Duffett Research Group. The FDR Group designed the study, moderated the focus groups, crafted the questionnaire, and analyzed the data. In particular, we would like to thank Ann Duffett whose expert knowledge and thoughtful insight ensured that our report reflects the views of the 1,101 teachers surveyed. Thanks also to Jennie Herriot-Hatfield, who provided valuable research assistance, and to Susan Headden and Robin Smiles for their careful editing and infinite patience. Finally, we would like to thank all of the teachers who participated in the focus groups and completed the survey.

The Joyce Foundation provided funding for this project. The findings and conclusions are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the foundation.

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The volume and pace of teacher-related reforms in America are nothing short of remarkable. All at once, state and district policymakers, largely in response to federal grant incentives, are trying to create new teacher evaluation systems, overhaul professional development, revise tenure laws, and rethink hiring, compensation, and dismissal policies.¹ They are doing it all with stunning speed and alongside a host of other reforms, including the implementation of common standards and new student assessments. Tight deadlines, some as early as next year, reinforce the familiar mantra: we must do more, and we must do it now.

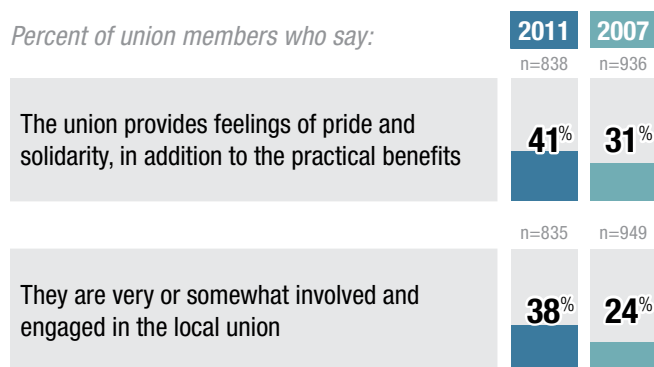
Teachers are the presumed agents of all of this change. They face not only a new slate of bold reforms, but also a long list of budget cuts likely to have an even bigger and more immediate impact on their schools, classrooms, jobs, and paychecks.² How these two trends – adding on and cutting back – will intersect is a question making teachers understandably anxious about their individual work and the future of their profession. According to the most recent *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, teachers are reporting the lowest levels of job satisfaction since 1989, with just 44 percent of respondents describing themselves as “very satisfied” with their classroom careers, down from 62 percent just three years ago.³

To understand how and why teachers’ opinions may be changing, Education Sector worked with the Farkas Duffett Research Group to conduct four focus groups and a nationally representative survey of K-12 public school teachers.⁴ The survey, which gathered responses from 1,101 teachers, repeated questions from a 2007 Education Sector survey and a 2003 Public Agenda survey about a variety of teacher-centered reforms, including new approaches to evaluation, pay, and tenure, and the role of unions in pushing for or against these reforms.⁵ Accordingly, this report examines changes in teacher opinion from 2007 to 2011 and, as with the 2007 report, looks closely at differences between new teachers (less than five years) and veterans (more than 20 years).

The findings show strong continued support among teachers for unions. Despite plenty of teacher angst about union membership – “we shouldn’t have to join, dues are too high, work rules are too rigid” – teachers still believe that unions play an important role in protecting teachers’ jobs. Union members – roughly three-quarters of the nation’s teachers – are more likely than four years ago to report involvement in local union activities and more likely to associate their membership with feelings of pride and solidarity. (See Figure 1.)

That is not to say teachers don’t want to see change – both in the profession and in the role of the union. “We can do better,” offers an elementary teacher

Figure 1. Increases in Union Pride and Involvement



Note: Percentages in figures may not total to 100 percent due to rounding or omission of answer categories. Question wording may be edited for space. Complete question wording and data are available in the appendix. Small discrepancies between percentages in the text, in the figures, and in the appendix are due to rounding.

in Illinois, “as an entire profession and as individual teachers.”⁶ Some teachers have even begun their own movements to transform their profession, from the Boston-based TeachPlus, which now supports a reform network of more than 5,000 teachers in six cities, to the teacher-led EdVisions schools in Minnesota. And according to this survey, there is a growing sense among teachers that certain elements of teaching are improving. Teachers are more likely (in 2011 compared to 2003) to see evaluation and tenure as meaningful. They are also more likely to support particular reform proposals, like paying teachers more to teach hard-to-staff subjects and in low-performing schools.

The union role in reform, according to teachers, is also changing. Or at least they think it should. Teachers today are more likely to say they want unions to help with and even lead reforms, including some pretty controversial ones. Most teachers, for example, say their local union doesn’t lead any efforts to identify or retrain ineffective teachers, or help guide them out of teaching. But majorities of these teachers say the union should do exactly that.

A Changing Role for Unions?

The nation’s first teachers unions were established to ensure decent wages, hours, and working conditions for the teacher workforce, or what original American labor leader Samuel Gompers called “bread and butter” basics. By their very nature, teachers unions, primarily through collective bargaining that began in the 1960s, hold the line to protect these standards and resist whatever changes may threaten them. Teachers have traditionally viewed unions accordingly, for job and wage security and for protection from administrator bias and favoritism.

The idea that teachers unions would actively support education reform, working with rather than against district and school management, is relatively new. First pushed to the forefront of the union agenda in the 1980s, “new unionism” focused less on restrictive work rules and more on creating cooperative relationships among labor and management leaders.⁷ Whether it works is still controversial. How could a union, for example, offer job protection to its members and, at the same time, negotiate dismissal policies that threaten those protections?

“We can do better, as an entire profession and as individual teachers.”

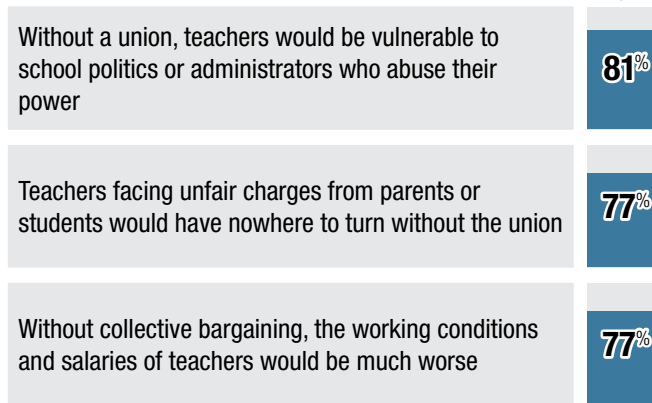
Some argue it can’t. Stanford political scientist Terry Moe says it’s impossible for the union to ever be a true partner in reform because it is wed to the interest of its members.⁸ In today’s climate, those interests are focused more than ever on job security. *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* found two-thirds of teachers report that their schools have experienced layoffs of teachers or other staff in the last year. This same survey found that more than a third (34 percent) of teachers do not feel that their job is secure. That’s four times as many than just five years ago.⁹

It should not be surprising, then, that teachers are seeking security and turning to the one place they know they can find it. The union, teachers believe, is a source of protection, an insurance policy, without which they would be far worse off. More than three-quarters of teachers today (including more than 70 percent of new teachers) say that, absent the union, their working conditions and salaries would suffer. Majorities also agree that they would be more vulnerable to school politics, and would have nowhere to turn in the face of unfair charges by parents or students. (See Figure 2.)

With more than three-fourths of public school teachers nationwide belonging to a union or association, it might seem that teacher attitudes toward unions could be explained simply by their membership numbers.¹⁰ Teachers unions do enjoy an enormous membership base, far larger than other labor unions, and certainly play a strong role in influencing the opinions of teachers. But more than half of teachers who are not members of a union or association agree that the union protects the working conditions and salaries of all teachers and that teachers would be more vulnerable without a union.

Figure 2. Unions as Protectors

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat agree with each of the following:

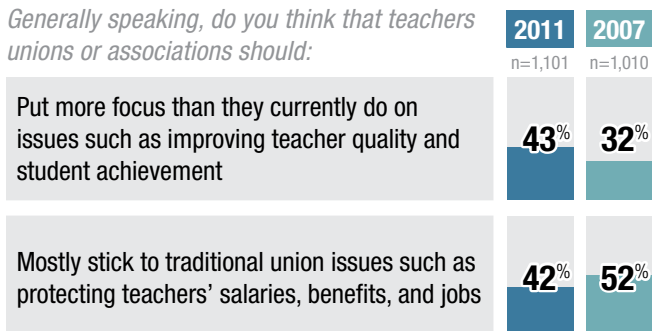


More Than Bread and Butter

Today's teachers want more than just bread and butter basics from their unions. They expect that unions will not only protect them, but also will engage in some of the reforms aimed at transforming their profession. The proportion of teachers saying unions should focus more on improving teacher quality is growing, from 32 percent in 2007 to 43 percent today. (See Figure 3.) And this growth is most notable among veteran teachers, whose jump in support is nearly double that of newer teachers (17 points versus 9 points).¹¹ Still, for some teachers, the union's role should be to stand against the rising tide of reform. "If they're raising requirements, because they're always raising requirements on what teachers have to do, somebody's job needs to be 'no,'" argues a high school math teacher from Washington, D.C. "That could be seen as a roadblock to teacher quality but it's an appropriate role for a union. Somebody has to say 'no.'"

Figure 3. Move to Reform

Generally speaking, do you think that teachers unions or associations should:



So what's a union to do? Is it possible to both protect and reform a workforce at the same time? Is the result another round of "new unionism," this time in the context of unprecedented federal funding for and focus on teacher-centered reforms?

The nation's two largest teachers unions are betting on it. Both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers announced plans last year to push for previously untouchable reforms, including changes to hiring and evaluation policies. The two unions, along with several national philanthropic foundations and the U.S. Department of Education, are supporting efforts to promote labor-management collaboration. One such effort is the Teacher Urban Reform Network, led by TURN founder and AFT Vice President Adam Urbanski, which aims

"If they're raising requirements, because they're always raising requirements on what teachers have to do, somebody's job needs to be 'no.' That could be seen as a roadblock to teacher quality but it's an appropriate role for a union. Somebody has to say 'no.'"

to restructure local unions to be full partners in reform. It's not easy work; labor-management relations have long been defined by an entrenched and adversarial "us versus them" mentality. But most teachers support the idea of more labor involvement in reform. More than half – 62 percent – say local unions would be helpful partners in improving low-performing schools, with only 14 percent saying that local union involvement would be an obstacle to reform.

While the challenges of labor-management partnership are many, and don't always result in measurable changes in policy or practice, there are some notable successes.¹² In Illinois, for example, the state's teachers unions helped to develop and

pass an ambitious slate of reform legislation that ties teacher pay and tenure to student learning outcomes. Close to half of teachers say their local union and district have a good relationship, one characterized by cooperation and trust, although this number has remained virtually unchanged since 2007. (See Figure 4.) Notably, teachers who say union-district relations are mostly cooperative are more likely than those who report conflict to report that their school made adequate yearly progress in the last year (68 percent compared to 56 percent).

The Big Three: Evaluation, Pay, and Tenure

While teachers show consistent support for traditional union concerns such as more planning time and small class size, their opinions about evaluation, pay, and tenure reforms seem to be changing.

Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation is, without question, the fastest-moving and most controversial area of reform in education today. With plenty of evidence that current evaluation systems are seriously flawed, the push for an evaluation overhaul makes sense. But it has, from the start, been fraught with debate. Introduced in districts and states as a means to measure teaching effectiveness, the move to new teacher evaluation systems has been branded as an accountability reform, seen as a way to distinguish the good from the bad. At the core of the controversy is the question of how teacher effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, is best measured.

While using students' standardized test scores is perhaps the simplest way to quantify an individual teacher's effect, and to compare teachers within and across schools, is it an accurate measure? Is it fair? For years, teachers unions have led the resistance to the use of student test scores as an evaluation measure, pointing to the poor quality of tests overall, the inaccuracy of using standardized tests to assess an individual teacher's performance, and the unfairness of using tests to compare teachers. But, in just the last two years, both national unions have revised their positions on teacher evaluation and no longer categorically oppose the use of test scores for evaluation.¹³

Figure 4. More Cooperation Than Conflict in Union-District Relationship

Today in your district, how would you describe the relationship between the teachers union or association and the district leadership? Is it mostly about:

	2011 n=1,074	2007 n=971
Conflict and distrust	29%	28%
Cooperation and trust	45%	44%
There is no union or association	4%	4%
Not sure	22%	24%

It would be fair to ask whether union leaders have actually changed their minds about evaluation measures, or whether they are strategically positioning themselves to be players in what is proving to be the most important and potentially meaningful teacher reform in decades. To be sure, neither union is enthusiastic about the use of test scores for evaluation. And there is still major disagreement in the broader field of education – among educators, policymakers, and researchers – over how reliable student test scores are as a measure of teacher performance. Evaluation reforms that use “growth” models, for example, which use test scores to show a teacher's effect on student growth from one year to the next, have only increased the fervor on both sides. “Value-added” models, the most sophisticated of test-based growth models, are unstable and unreliable, critics say, as well as impossible to understand. Others disagree and say value-added data offer additional and important signals of teacher effectiveness.

Teachers find themselves caught in the middle of this conflict, understandably nervous about how they will be measured, and to what end. And some teachers are concerned that their career is in their students' hands. “Kids now understand that we're being evaluated on their scores,” worries a 12-year

Feeling Good About Evaluation

- Teachers in low-income schools (75 percent or more free/reduced lunch, compared to those in schools with less than 25 percent free/reduced lunch) are more likely to have positive feelings about their recent evaluation. By a 13-point difference (66 percent and 53 percent), these teachers are more likely to report that the feedback was meaningful and helped improve teaching. These teachers, who by and large teach students with many social and economic needs, may seek more feedback and support and thus appreciate any effort to meet it. Or, better feedback may be the result of administrators who are more focused on evaluation, possibly because their schools are under greater scrutiny.
- Newer teachers are more likely than veterans (78 percent to 58 percent) to say the feedback from their most recent evaluation was meaningful and helped to improve their teaching. This may not be surprising given that inexperienced teachers face a steep learning curve and may rely on evaluations more than their experienced peers. Administrators, recognizing this, may be more focused on evaluating newer teachers. This might explain why newer teachers are also more likely (89 percent compared to 78 percent) to say that their evaluation was done carefully and taken seriously.
- Teachers who say that the union-district relationship in their district is characterized by cooperation and trust (compared to those who say the relationship is characterized by conflict) are more likely to report positive feelings about their most recent evaluation. Are better evaluations a result of good labor-management relations? Or do labor and management simply get along better in places where evaluation systems are already strong? Either way, the pattern is notable. In districts with union-district cooperation, teachers are 15 points more likely to say their most recent formal evaluation was done carefully and taken seriously by the administration (84 percent compared to 69 percent), and to say that the rubric and criteria used for the evaluation were fair and relevant (82 percent compared to 67 percent). They were 16 points more likely to say the feedback from the evaluation was meaningful and helpful to improve their teaching (69 percent compared to 53 percent).

veteran who teaches eighth-grade English in West Los Angeles. “I’ve heard kids saying, ‘We’re going to test-bomb this one teacher because we want to get him fired.’”

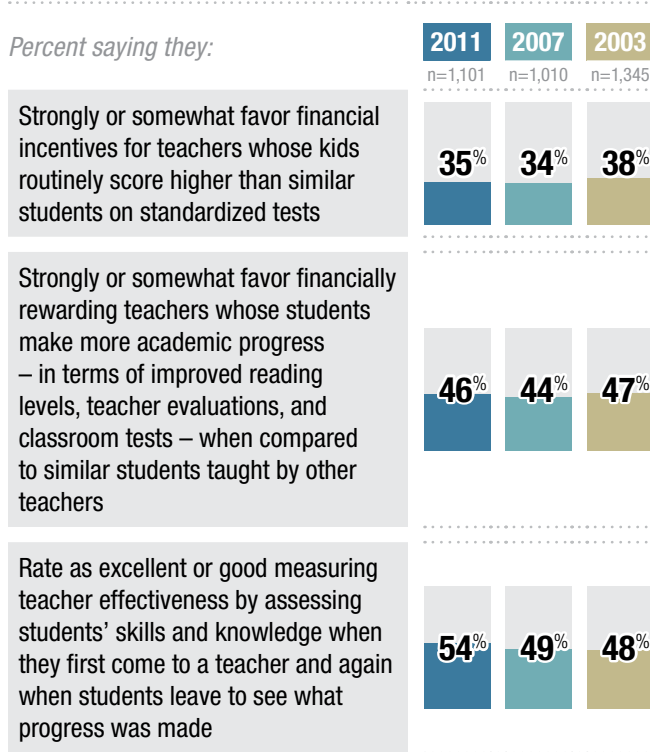
Despite these anxieties, teachers are more likely now than in 2007, albeit by only a small margin, to agree that measuring student progress over time (the theory behind growth models) is a good or excellent way to measure teacher effectiveness (from 49 percent to 54 percent). But they still don’t trust test scores. Only about 1 in 3 teachers are open to rewarding teachers whose students routinely score higher on standardized tests. (See Figure 5.)

Teachers, however, whose evaluations include test scores as a measure (most did not) are substantially more likely to favor a growth approach (72 percent).

Since teachers at schools with a high percentage of low-income students are more likely to have their students’ standardized test scores included in their evaluation than teachers at schools with wealthier students (25 percent compared to 9 percent), they are also more likely to favor measuring student progress over time (58 percent to 48 percent). Teachers in schools with mostly low-income students may also recognize the potential for their students to demonstrate significant improvement on standardized tests, compared to teachers of wealthier, and already high-scoring, students.

Overall, teachers are feeling better about evaluation. (See Sidebar, “Feeling Good About Evaluation” on page 5.) Teachers give their most recent formal evaluations high marks. More than three-quarters say their evaluations were done carefully and taken

Figure 5. No to Test Scores, Warming to Growth?



seriously by administration and that the criteria used for evaluation were fair and relevant. And the quality and outcomes of teacher evaluations appear to be on an upward course – more than six in 10 (62 percent) report that the feedback they receive from the evaluation was meaningful and helped to improve their teaching. (See Figure 6.)¹⁴

And this is a trend. Teachers’ opinions of their most recent evaluations have been improving. Compared to 2007, teachers are more likely to say their evaluation was useful and effective and less likely to say it was just a formality. Still, one in three continue to

“Kids now understand that we’re being evaluated on their scores. I’ve heard kids saying, ‘We’re going to test-bomb this one teacher because we want to get him fired.’”

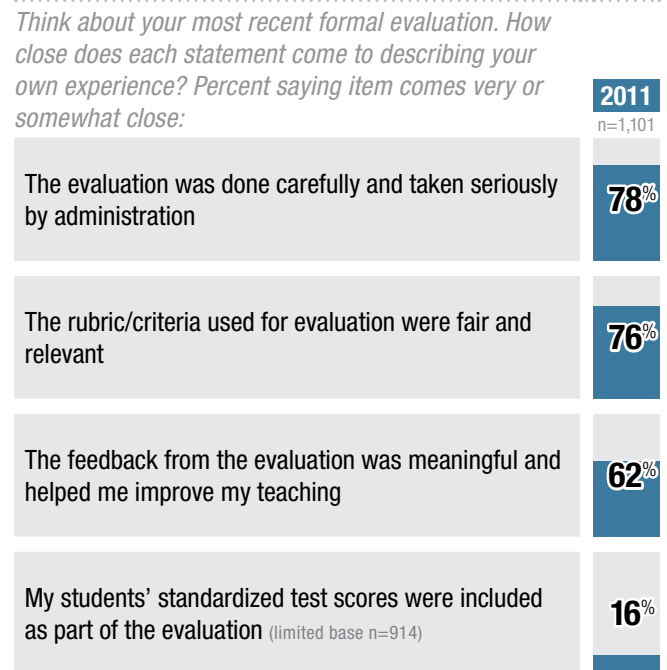
describe their most recent formal evaluation as “well-intentioned but not particularly helpful” to their teaching practice. (See video for more on what teachers had to say about their most recent evaluations.)

Pay Proposals

Do teachers support pay reform? It depends.

Overall, teachers are not convinced that they should be paid based on performance. With evaluation measures not well-established or understood, and teachers anxious about the use of test scores as a measure, it’s not surprising that just over a third of teachers think it makes sense to pay more to those whose students routinely score better on standardized tests – a number that has stayed the same since

Figure 6. Careful, Meaningful, Fair Evaluations



2007 (35 percent in 2011; 34 percent in 2007). Some teachers question whether test scores can measure their students’ progress, especially if their students are low-income or English language learners. “My school has 90 percent poverty with 18 different languages,” responds one teacher to the survey. “I love working with these children – but if my salary or job was based upon test scores – I would be crazy to continue with this teaching assignment.” Instead,

a much larger proportion (57 percent in 2011; 58 percent in 2007) support higher pay for teachers who consistently receive outstanding evaluations by their principal.

University of Washington professor Dan Goldhaber and his colleagues at the Center for Education Data and Research, who have studied teacher attitudes about pay reform, suggest that teachers may be more supportive of pay reforms that are based on factors over which teachers have more personal control, such as what subject and in what school they teach.¹⁵ If this is true, the less control teachers feel they have over performance measures, like student test scores, the less likely they will be to support proposals that tie pay to performance.

Most teachers are supportive of proposals to pay more to teachers who have more challenging assignments, specifically those who work in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools.¹⁶ Most also like the idea of giving teachers who work for and receive national accreditation and who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects like science or math a bump in pay. Support for these proposals has increased since 2003, from 70 percent to 83 percent for teaching in tough neighborhoods, from 57 percent to 66 percent for earning accreditation, and, in the largest jump, from 42 percent to 58 percent for compensation for teaching hard-to-fill subjects.

Among all teachers:

- 83 percent support paying more to teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools (a steadily increasing trend from 70 percent in 2003 and 80 percent in 2007)
- 66 percent support paying more to teachers who receive accreditation from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) (a steadily increasing trend from 57 percent in 2003 and 64 percent in 2007)
- 58 percent support paying more to teachers who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects like science or math (a steadily increasing trend from 42 percent in 2003 and 53 percent in 2007)
- 35 percent support paying more to teachers whose students score higher than similar students on standardized tests (not a significant change from 38 percent in 2003 or 34 percent in 2007)

Compared to teachers who are members of unions or associations, non-union teachers are more likely to support more pay for teachers who work in low-performing schools (87 percent vs. 82 percent),

“My school has 90 percent poverty with 18 different languages. I love working with these children – but if my salary or job was based upon test scores – I would be crazy to continue with this teaching assignment.”

for teachers who consistently receive outstanding evaluations from principals (69 percent vs. 53 percent), and for teachers whose students score higher on standardized tests (48 percent vs. 30 percent). Regional differences support this same pattern, with teachers in the mostly non-union South more supportive of pay reform than those in union-heavy Northeast and Midwest. (See video to learn more about what financial incentives teachers favor or oppose.)

The Meaning of Tenure

In Latin, tenure (tenere) means to hold or to keep. Ironically, tenure is among the policies that many policymakers are hoping to get rid of, or at least change. Nineteen states have amended their tenure laws for K-12 teachers in the last year alone.¹⁷

The move to reform tenure is driven primarily by the belief that tenure laws make it too difficult to fire ineffective teachers. Indeed, tenure laws do impose a lengthy and costly process for dismissal, one which in many states involves multiple hearings and appeals. And while tenure is not a guarantee of lifetime employment, it is true that very few tenured teachers are dismissed for poor performance.¹⁸ Even Randi Weingarten, the head of the AFT, agrees that

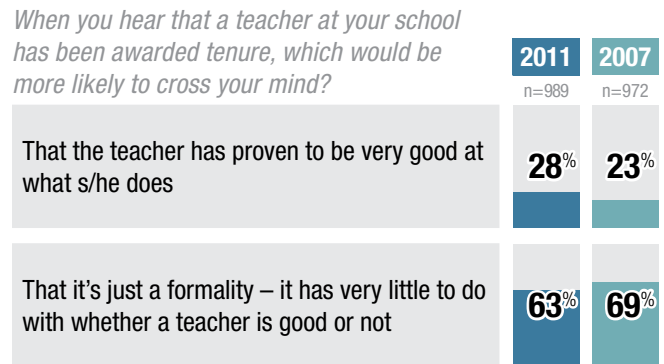
tenure should not be a barrier to firing ineffective teachers. “Make sure tenure is about fairness,” she recently said, “and make sure it’s not a shield for incompetence.”¹⁹ Teachers, for the most part, agree. Only a third of teachers say they would actually consider trading tenure, for example for a \$5,000 pay bonus (those without tenure are, not surprisingly, more likely to trade it).

But they are ready and willing to make changes to tenure-related dismissal policies. “Teachers pay the greatest price for incompetent teachers,” responds one teacher in the survey. “Year after year, [other teachers] pick up the slack.” And teachers think the union should play a role in simplifying the process of removing ineffective teachers instead of leaving it to the district and school administration. Compared with teachers in 2007, teachers today are more likely to favor the union doing this: from 63 percent in 2007 to 75 percent in 2011. Veterans, the teachers most likely to favor strong job protections, have increased their support for unions taking on this function from 60 percent in 2007 to 75 percent in 2011. Newcomers show even stronger support, from 62 percent in 2007 to 91 percent in 2011. With “last-in, first-out” policies still the rule in most places and layoffs looming, this may reflect newer teachers’ frustration that their jobs are at risk. (See video for more on what teachers think about the union’s role in removing ineffective teachers.

“Teachers pay the greatest price for incompetent teachers. Year after year, [other teachers] pick up the slack.”

Tenure also seems to be a more meaningful signal of teacher effectiveness than it was just a few years ago. In 2007, only 23 percent of teachers said that awarding tenure meant that a teacher “has proven to be very good at what s/he does” as opposed to “just a formality”; in 2011, the number increased to 28 percent – a small increase, but a statistically significant one. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7. Tenure Still a Formality, But Getting Better



Union-district relationships also appear to affect how teachers view tenure. Teachers who work in districts with an antagonistic relationship with the union are more likely to characterize tenure as a formality compared with teachers where the union-district relationship is characterized by trust and cooperation (71 percent vs. 58 percent). In contrast, teachers who work in districts with a cooperative union-management relationship are more likely to view tenure as a proven measure of teacher effectiveness than their peers in conflict-ridden districts (35 percent vs. 23 percent).

What Unions Do Best

Teachers want their unions to protect their jobs and to negotiate good salaries and benefits. Overall, teachers say their unions are fulfilling this role fairly well. But teachers also increasingly want unions to be involved in improving their work, and in supporting certain reforms. So far, teachers see far less evidence that this is happening. Teachers report far less union involvement in efforts to mentor or train teachers or to provide instructional help or career ladders, and even less union participation in pushing for evaluation and dismissal reforms.

Teachers report continued strong involvement by their unions on bread and butter issues. Fully 84 percent say their union “protects teachers through due process and grievance procedures,” with 71 percent of those teachers giving excellent or good ratings. These numbers have held steady since the questions were first asked in 2007.

Along the same lines, seven in 10 teachers (70 percent) say that their union “effectively negotiates

contracts, salary, and benefits,” and the vast majority of these teachers (69 percent) say their union is doing an excellent or good job. Still, 18 percent – that’s about one in six teachers and an increase from 13 percent in 2007 – report that their union does not currently do this, an indication that a sizeable number of teachers are not benefitting from what is ostensibly one of the union’s most essential functions. Perhaps this increase is due to a literal interpretation of the word “effectively”: teachers today so often talk about feeling under attack and vulnerable, it’s possible that while their own union does negotiate their contracts, salary, and benefits, the perception among teachers is that unions are not *effectively* doing so.

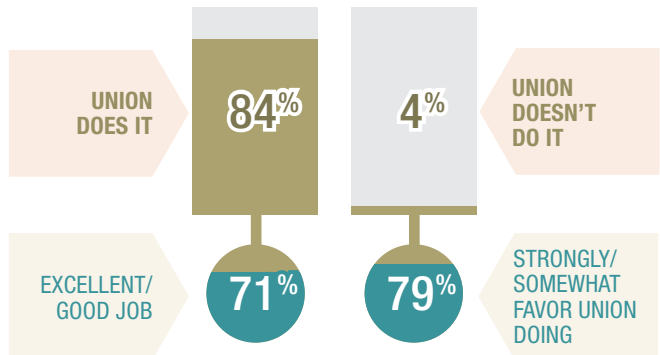
Class size is another issue in which teachers indicate their union could be serving them better. Just over half of teachers (52 percent) say their union works on their behalf “to keep class size down,” but among these only about half (51 percent) say the union is doing an excellent or good job. Among the 32 percent of teachers who say that their union doesn’t currently negotiate class size, the vast majority – 83 percent – would strongly or somewhat favor it doing so, suggesting that many teachers view class size as an issue ripe for union intercession. There’s been virtually no change in these numbers between 2007 and 2011. (See Figure 8.)

On each of these three items – protecting teachers through due process, negotiating contracts, and negotiating to keep class size down – there are interesting and notable differences within the teacher population. Teachers in schools that are classified as “in need of improvement” are more likely to say their union currently performs these functions, compared with teachers in schools that made “adequately yearly progress” under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. And the same is true when comparing veteran teachers with newcomers – for each, veterans are more likely than newcomers to say their union currently plays these roles. (See sidebar, “Dividing Lines” on page 12.)

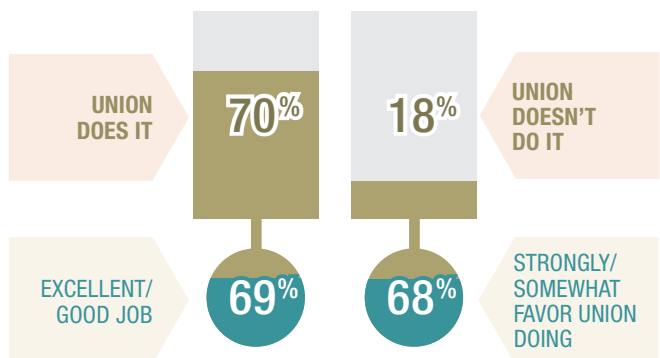
Are unions as involved in offering supports for instruction and career development? Not so much. Only 38 percent of teachers say their union updates teachers on new instructional methods and curriculum (46 percent say it does not), and 35 percent say the union offers high-quality training and professional development (47 percent say it does not). Forty

Figure 8. Union as Bread and Butter Protector

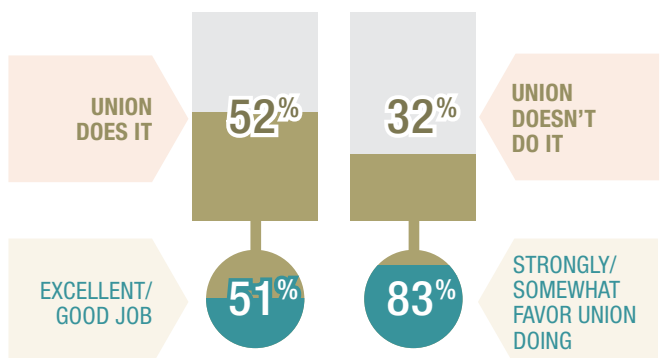
Protect teachers through due process and grievance procedures



Effectively negotiate contracts, salary, and benefits on behalf of teachers



Negotiate to keep class size down in the district

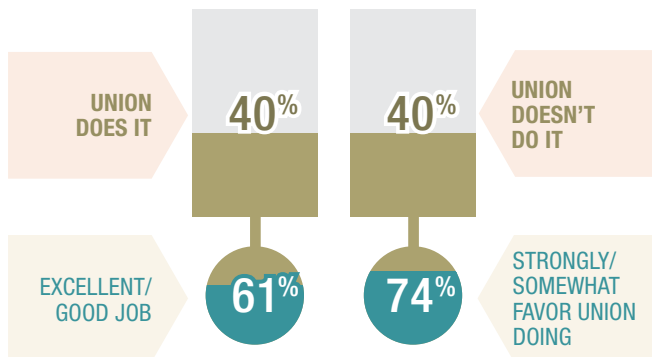


Note: See appendix for individual base for each item

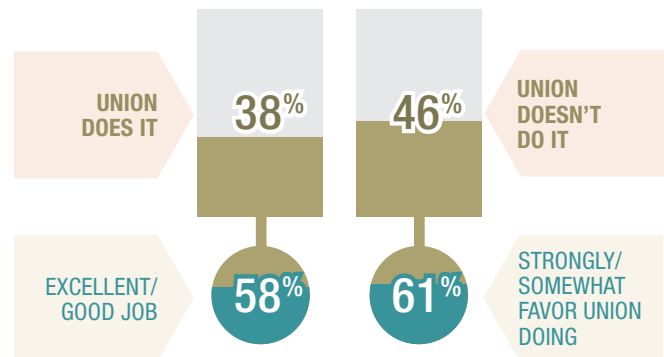
percent report that the union provides mentoring to new teachers (just as many, 40 percent, say the union does not do this).

Figure 9. Union as Supporters of Instruction and Career Development

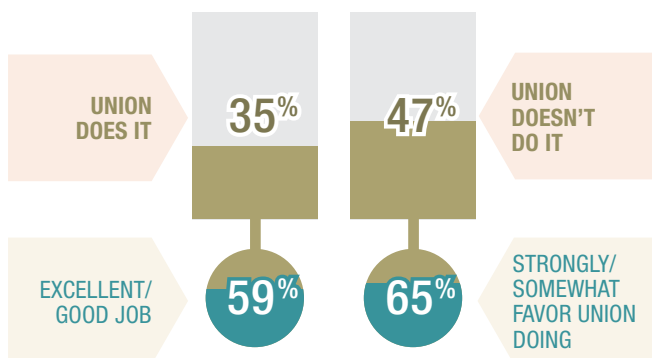
Provide support and mentoring to new teachers



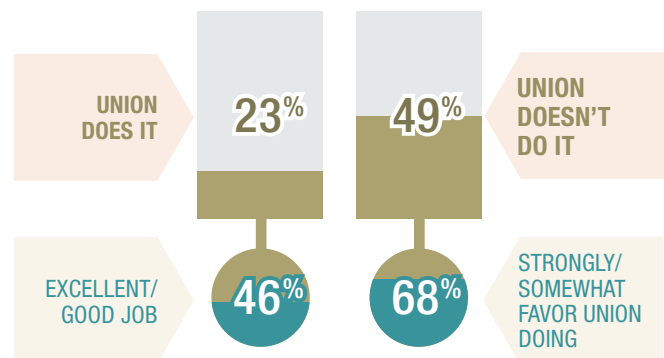
Keep teachers updated on new instructional methods and curriculum



Provide teachers with high quality training and professional development



Expand the career ladder for teachers by negotiating new and differentiated roles and responsibilities



Note: See appendix for individual base for each item

Expanding the career ladder, often lauded as a way to advance the profession by offering more diverse job options and pathways for teachers, does not seem to be the bailiwick of teachers unions. Half of respondents (49 percent) say their union does not currently do this, and only 23 percent of teachers say their union does, down from 33 percent who said so back in 2007. (See Figure 9.)

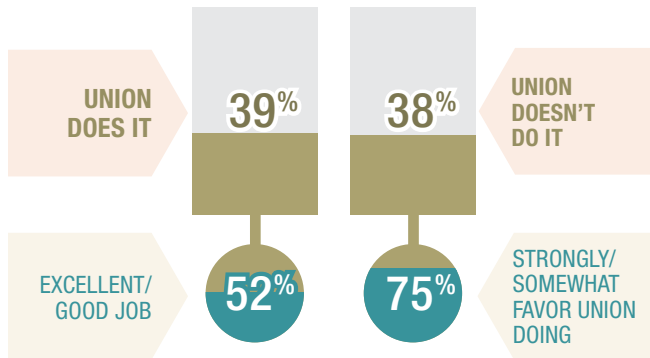
Given the traditional position of unions on evaluation and dismissal, it is not surprising that teachers would say unions are not a part of negotiating these reforms. But there is evidence that unions, at least from a teachers' perspective, may be getting better at it. Take for example "guiding ineffective teachers out of the profession." While just 10 percent of teachers say this is a responsibility that their union carries out, 37 percent of these teachers say their union is doing

an excellent or good job of it – and that's more than double the 18 percent who said the same in 2007. And of the 11 percent who say their union "leads efforts to identify ineffective teachers and retrain them," the percentage saying that the union does an excellent or good job has increased from 26 percent to 41 percent since 2007.

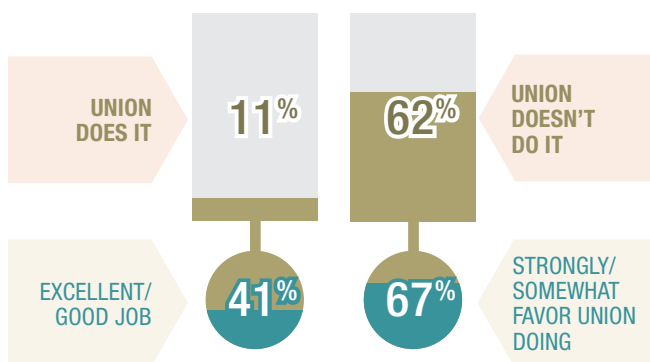
Similarly, teachers aren't necessarily witnessing more union involvement in negotiating teacher evaluation, but there are signs that the union is doing a better job than it was several years ago. The number of teachers who said their union negotiates new ways to evaluate teachers in 2007 is roughly the same today (41 percent in 2007 and 39 percent in 2011). But among those teachers who say the union is playing this role, more rate the union as excellent or good today than in 2007 (a jump from 45 percent to 52 percent). And

Figure 10. Union as Reformers on Evaluation, Dismissal

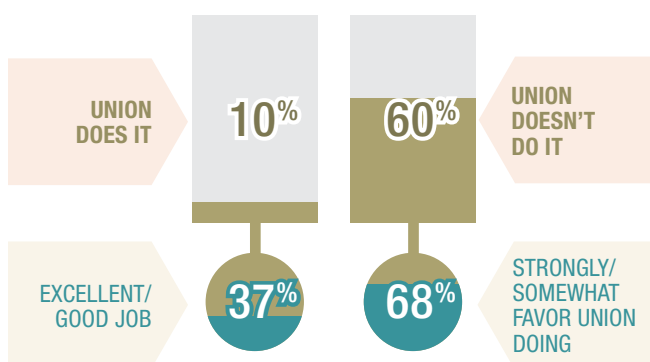
Negotiate new ways to more meaningfully and effectively evaluate teachers



Lead efforts to identify ineffective teachers and retrain them



Guide ineffective teachers out of the profession



Note: See appendix for individual base for each item

among those teachers who say their union does *not* currently negotiate evaluation, three-quarters say the union should play this role. (See Figure 10.) Are teachers more supportive of union involvement in evaluation because they view it as important and in need of an overhaul? Perhaps. Or it could be that teachers want unions more involved in the *negotiation* process because they are increasingly uneasy with the seemingly inevitable changes that are coming to teacher evaluation.

Conclusion

The union is, by no means, in the clear from the teachers' perspective. While the vast majority of teachers say unions are either essential (46 percent) or important (40 percent), these numbers have shifted some over the years, with a notable decrease in the number who say unions are absolutely essential (down from 54 percent in 2007). Some complain about union dues. "I pay hundreds of dollars a year for something I don't want and don't need," explains one teacher. Others resent the rigid work rules that unions safeguard. "There's a difference," says another, "between safeguarding my job and regulating my work."

But teachers aren't giving up on their unions: only 12 percent say they could do without unions altogether, a number that's held steady from 2007. The economic insecurity of the nation, and the resulting job insecurity of educators, may explain some of this. But, like a family member who frustrates, or even disgraces, the union continues to be a welcome part of most teachers' work lives. Teachers feel aligned with the union, and anxious about the idea of losing it and its associated protections.

Over the last few years, education reform has moved at a ferocious pace, with teachers feeling left out and left behind. Fully seven in 10 (71 percent) say that despite having the strength of their unions behind them, rank-and-file teachers usually have very little control over what goes on in their schools. "Every year there's just more out of our control that's expected to be within our control," says one Virginia teacher. "What's expected of us has become almost unreasonable without any kind of compensation for those extra expectations."

“Every year there’s just more out of our control that’s expected to be within our control. What’s expected of us has become almost unreasonable without any kind of compensation for those extra expectations.”

Still, the power of unions to block reform has never been more evident to the public than in the last few years, as the nation watched teachers unions mount massive campaigns to stop legislation in multiple

states that would limit collective bargaining. At the same time, union leaders have altered their positions in unprecedented ways, endorsing major changes and gaining the support and praise of national policymakers and leaders. “You have elevated the profession,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently said of NEA and AFT presidents Dennis Van Roekel and Randi Weingarten. Have they? Or are they promising more than they can deliver, to both protect the current structure of teachers’ work as they simultaneously work to transform it?

Whether unions really can provide bread and butter protections for teachers and also advance dramatic reforms to the teaching profession remains an open question. If they can, now is the time to do it. In the coming years, the viability of the union will be determined by whether teachers perceive them as being part of the problem or part of the solution for public education.

Dividing Lines

Of course, not all teachers are the same. A comparison of new teachers (less than 5 years on the job) and veteran teachers (more than 20 years) finds agreement on many points, including common resistance to using student test scores as an evaluation measure and shared support for certain recruitment reforms over others. But it also shows newer teachers to be more in favor of alternative pay proposals and less supportive, overall, of unions.

Veterans are less likely, now than in 2007, to support easing state certification requirements (45 percent to 34 percent in 2011), or making it easier to come and go without losing retirement benefits.

Most groups understandably fall in line behind their own self-interest: veterans – 92 percent of whom are tenured – overwhelmingly disagree (72 percent) with the statement that teachers would have more prestige if collective bargaining and lifetime tenure were eliminated while only 47 percent of newcomers do. Similarly, alternatively certified teachers – often transitioning from another career – are more likely

than traditionally certified teachers to think that actively recruiting and training second-career candidates is an excellent or good idea (72 percent compared to 41 percent).

Alternatively certified teachers are also more likely to support financial incentives for teachers who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects than traditionally certified teachers (74 percent to 55 percent.) This finding makes sense considering that alternatively certified teachers are also more likely to teach in high-demand subjects such as math, science, special education, and bilingual education.¹ While their support for several differentiated pay proposals exceeds that of traditionally certified teachers, alternatively certified teachers want the union involved: they are more likely than traditionally certified teachers to support the union taking the lead on negotiating a way to add teacher performance as a consideration when deciding an individual teacher’s salary (69 percent to 46 percent). (See Appendix A on page 14.)

1. National Center for Education Information, “Profile of Teachers in the U.S.,” 2011, pg. 17.

Notes

1. Following the 2009 Race to the Top federal grant competition, which totaled more than \$4.3 billion, most states moved quickly on key education reforms. Since 2009, for example, 32 states and the District of Columbia have made changes to their state teacher evaluation policy. http://www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/nctq_stateOfTheStates.pdf
2. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 37 states are providing less funding per student to local school districts this year than last. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3569>. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Education Jobs Fund, the federal government provided \$50 billion to states in order to save or create jobs in education. Nevertheless, the same study by CBPP shows that, by September 2011, local school districts had cut 278,000 jobs nationally compared with 2008.
3. *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy*, March 2012. <http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/contributions/foundation/american-teacher/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2011.pdf>
4. Four focus groups were conducted in the summer of 2011 in Frisco, Texas; Chicago, Ill.; Los Angeles, Calif.; and Alexandria, Va. (including teachers from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland).
5. Ann Duffett, Steve Farkas, Andrew Rotherham, and Elena Silva, *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2008). 2003 comparisons are based on Public Agenda, *Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think About Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters* (New York, NY: Public Agenda, 2003).
6. Quotes are from focus groups conducted as part of the research for this project, as well as from open-ended responses to survey questions.
7. For more on “new unionism” see Charles Taylor Kerchner, Julia E. Koppich, and Joseph G. Weeres, *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society* (Jossey-Bass, 1997); Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham, eds., *Collective Bargaining in Education: Negotiating Change in Today’s Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2006); Tom Loveless, *Conflicting Missions? Teachers Unions and Educational Reform* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).
8. Terry Moe, *Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America’s Public Schools* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).
9. *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy*, March 2012.
10. As of 2007-08, most recent available data, “U.S. Department of Education School and Staffing Survey,” http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_043_t1s.asp. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides up-to-date data on union affiliation by occupation and industry, 2012: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t03.htm>. Education remains one of the most heavily unionized occupations.
11. For this survey, newer teachers are defined as having fewer than five years of teaching, veterans having more than 20.
12. For example see case studies of union-district partnership efforts: Susan Headden and Elena Silva, *Unlikely Allies: Unions and Districts in the Battle for School Reform* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2011); Sean Hamill, *Forging a New Partnership: The Story of Teacher Union and School District Collaboration in Pittsburgh* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2011); Jonathan Eckert, et al. *Local Labor Management Relationships as a Vehicle to Advance Reform: Findings from the U.S. Department of Education’s Labor Management Conference* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011).
13. The AFT switched its position more swiftly and dramatically than the NEA, which last summer stated its support for the use of standardized test scores if and only if the tests meet a demanding set of “high-quality” criteria.
14. The 2011 survey includes a trend question from 2007 on teachers’ overall impression of their most recent formal evaluation. Figure 6 shows data from a new, more detailed, battery of questions on evaluation in the 2011 survey.
15. Dan Goldhaber, Michael DeArmond, and Scott DeBurgomaster, “Teacher Attitudes about Compensation Reform: Implications for Reform Implementation,” CALDER Working Paper, 2010.
16. Among pay proposals, this is the only one that teachers favored “strongly” rather than “somewhat.”
17. Kathy Christie and Jennifer Dounay Zinth, *Teacher Tenure or Continuing Contract Laws* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, August 2011). States include: Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Louisiana passed tenure reform in August 2011. Virginia and Minnesota attempted but failed to pass tenure reform, and Connecticut and New Jersey reform bills are currently in the legislative process.
18. Daniel Weisburg, Susan Sexton, Jennifer Mulhern, and David Keeling, “The Widget Effect,” *Education Digest*, 75(2): 31-35 (2009).
19. Lyndsey Layton, “Democratic mayors challenge teachers unions in urban political shift,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 2012.

Appendix A: Dividing Lines

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	NEWCOMERS (<5 yrs)	VETERANS (>20 yrs)
	2011	2011
	n=98	n=356
Percent saying they have tenure or equivalent	28	92

Attracting Teachers to the Profession

Percent saying each of the following is an excellent or good idea for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers:

Giving teachers more time during the school day for class preparation and planning	77	85
Making it far easier to leave and return to teaching without losing retirement benefits	66	69
Actively recruiting and training second-career candidates from other fields and sectors of the economy	49	44
Easing state certification requirements while intensifying in-class supervision, observation, and mentoring	40	34
Offering new teachers substantially higher starting salaries in exchange for smaller pensions when they retire	33	21

Teacher Pay

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat support union taking lead on negotiating a way to add performance when deciding an individual teacher's salary	57	46
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Percent saying they strongly or somewhat favor each of the following:

Teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools	88	81
Teachers who receive accreditation from NBPTS	76	60
Teachers who consistently receive outstanding evaluations by their principals	74	49
Teachers who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects such as science or math	59	53
Teachers whose kids routinely score higher than similar students on standardized tests	37	32

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	NEWCOMERS (<5 yrs)	VETERANS (>20 yrs)
	2011	2011
	n=98	n=356

Evaluation

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat support the union taking a lead on ways to simplify the process for removing clearly ineffective teachers	91	75
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Percent saying each of the following comes very or somewhat close to describing their most recent formal evaluation:

It was done carefully and taken seriously by administration	89	78
Rubric/criteria used were fair and relevant	83	73
Feedback was meaningful and helped improve my teaching	78	58
Students' standardized test scores were included	18	12

Percent saying their most recent formal evaluation:

Was well intentioned but not particularly helpful to your teaching practice	46	36
Was useful and effective in terms of helping you be a better teacher	38	29
Was just a formality	15	34

Using Student Test Scores To Measure Teacher Effectiveness

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat favor financially rewarding teachers whose students make more academic progress (reading levels, teacher evaluations, classroom tests) when compared to similar students taught by other teachers	58	44
Percent saying it is an excellent or good idea to measure teacher effectiveness by assessing students' skills and knowledge when they first come to a teacher and to measure them again when students leave to see what progress was made	56	50

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	NEWCOMERS (<5 yrs)	VETERANS (>20 yrs)
	2011	2011
	n=98	n=356
Percent saying their students' standardized test scores were included as part of their most recent formal evaluation	18	12

Attitudes About Unions

Percent saying unions are absolutely essential	35	52
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Generally speaking, do you think that teachers unions or associations should:

Put more focus than they currently do on issues such as improving teacher quality and student achievement	38	49
Mostly stick to traditional union issues such as protecting teachers' salaries, benefits, and jobs	46	40

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat agree with each of the following statements:

Without a union, teachers would be vulnerable to school politics or administrators who abuse their power	76	85
Teachers facing unfair charges from parents or students would have nowhere to turn without the union	72	81
Without collective bargaining, the working conditions and salaries of teachers would be much worse	71	81
Despite having the strength of their unions behind them, rank-and-file teachers usually have very little control over what goes on in their own schools	71	73
The union charges far higher dues than are warranted by what it does for teachers	58	52
The union sometimes fights to protect teachers who really should be out of the classroom	54	53
Teachers would have more prestige if collective bargaining and lifetime tenure were eliminated	30	17
The union regularly provides information and opportunities to help me be a better teacher	36	53

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	NEWCOMERS (<5 yrs)	VETERANS (>20 yrs)
	2011	2011
	n=98	n=356
Percent of union members saying they are very or somewhat involved in the local union	20	46
Percent of union members saying being a union member provides feelings of pride and solidarity, in addition to practical benefits	22	49

Union Responsibilities

Percent saying union in their district currently does each of the following:

Protect teachers through due process and grievance procedures	75	87
Effectively negotiate contracts, salary, and benefits on behalf of teachers	65	74
Negotiate to keep class size down in the district	45	55
Negotiate new ways to more meaningfully and effectively evaluate teachers	39	42
Keep teachers updated on new instructional methods and curriculum	34	43
Provide support and mentoring to new teachers	34	45
Provide teachers with high-quality training and professional development	32	38
Expand the career ladder for teachers by negotiating new and differentiated roles and responsibilities	25	22
Lead efforts to identify ineffective teachers and retrain them	14	13
Guide ineffective teachers out of the profession	9	13
Percent who strongly or somewhat support district moving in direction of matching teachers with schools where any teacher, regardless of seniority, has an equal opportunity to fill a vacancy	59	47

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION (n=131)	TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATION (n=922)
Percent who rate actively recruiting and training second-career candidates from other fields and sectors of the economy as an excellent or good idea for attracting and retaining high quality teachers to the profession	72	41

Note: statistically significant differences are in **bold**

	ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION (n=131)	TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATION (n=922)
Percent who strongly or somewhat favor giving financial incentives to teachers who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects such as science or math	74	55
Percent saying they strongly or somewhat support union taking lead on negotiating a way to add performance when deciding an individual teacher's salary	69	46

Appendix B: Methodology

This report is based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,101 K-12 public school teachers conducted between November 2011 and January 2012. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points; it is higher when comparing percentages across sub-groups. Many of the survey questions were first asked in Education Sector's May 2008 *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform*; still others trend back to a 2003 Public Agenda report entitled *Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think About Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters*. The survey was preceded by four focus groups. The survey and the focus groups were conducted by the Farkas Duffett Resesarch Group (FDR Group) for Education Sector.

The Survey

Names were randomly drawn from a comprehensive database of current K-12 public school teachers maintained by Agile Education Marketing in Denver. A multi-mode approach was used; the survey instrument was designed, tested, and tailored for use both online and on paper (sent via either U.S. Priority or First Class Mail). Potential respondents were invited to participate in one of three ways:

- 1) Teachers with e-mail addresses were sent invitations explaining the research and asked to complete the survey online; a link to the survey was embedded in the invitation. An original message was sent on November 1, 2011, and a follow-up to non-respondents was sent on November 3. On November 16, a third message was sent to teachers who had started the survey but had not completed it; the message encouraged them to finish. A total of 16,500 e-mail messages were sent. Of these, 14,157 were delivered; 2,225 were opened; and in 949 cases the survey link was clicked. In total, 479 completed interviews were obtained from this approach.
- 2) Teachers with mailing addresses only (that is, no e-mail address was available) were sent letters via U.S. Priority Mail explaining the research and asked to complete a paper version of the questionnaire and return it in an enclosed postage-paid envelope.

They also received a telephone call alerting them to expect the Priority Mail. The letter was posted November 2, 2011, and the last completed questionnaire to be accepted arrived before November 29. Priority Mail is more expensive than First Class, but it has the advantage of a special envelope – large, thick stock paper, and colored red, white, and blue – so it is more likely to be noticed by its recipient. Also, it is guaranteed to arrive at its destination within two to three business days. A total of 1,900 Priority Mail letters were sent, and 346 completed paper surveys were received and data entered.

- 3) In an effort to reach a sample size of 1,100 K-12 public school teachers, an additional attempt was employed using the original list of 16,500 teachers who were originally asked to participate via e-mail. All records for complete, incomplete, or ineligible interviews were removed from the list, and then 5,000 teachers' names were randomly drawn. These teachers were sent, via First Class Mail, a cover letter describing the survey, the questionnaire, and a postage-paid envelope. The letter was posted November 29, 2011, and the last completed questionnaire to be accepted arrived by January 3, 2012. A total of 276 completed surveys were received and data entered.

Teachers in urban districts were oversampled to insure the survey netted a sufficient number of urban school teachers; out of 18,400 records, 2,900 were part of the urban oversample, and 144 interviews were completed from the oversample. The results are weighted to reflect the actual distribution of urban teachers in the teacher population.

As with all surveys, the risk of non-response is that the pool of survey respondents could differ from the true population of teachers, decreasing the ability to draw inferences from the data. A comparison of the demographic profile of respondents to that of the overall population of teachers shows they are similar on key demographic variables. Results also can be affected by non-sampling sources of bias, such as question wording. Steps were taken to minimize these, including pre-testing of the survey instrument.

All surveys were programmed, fielded, and tabulated by Clark Research, of Sioux Falls, S.D. The questionnaire was crafted by the FDR Group

and Education Sector; the two organizations are responsible for all interpretation and analysis of the data contained within this report. The two organizations also collaborated on the 2008 publication *Waiting to Be Won Over*, and many of the survey questions from that report provide a baseline for trend comparisons with the current survey.

Focus Groups

To help develop the questionnaire, four focus groups with public school teachers were conducted, one each in California, Illinois, Texas, and Virginia. The

purpose of the focus groups was to gain firsthand understanding of the views of public school teachers, to develop new hypotheses based on their input, and to design the survey items using language and terms that teachers are comfortable with. Participants were recruited to ensure an appropriate demographic mix of teachers by grade, socio-economic status of schools, and urbanicity. Most of the quotes from teachers used throughout the report originated in focus group conversations; some also came from handwritten comments on the paper questionnaires in response to open-ended questions. All focus groups were moderated by the FDR Group.

Population vs. Sample Comparison (by percent)

(n=1,101)

	Population	Sample Weighted	Sample Unweighted
Type of School			
Elementary	63	47	47
Middle		20	19
High	*Secondary 32	31	32
Something else	*Combined 5	2	2

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher, Private School Teacher, and BIE School Teacher Data Files," 2007-08. SASS combines middle and elementary.

Urbanicity

	Population	Sample Weighted	Sample Unweighted
Urban	26	26	33
Suburban/ Small Town	49	49	34
Rural	25	25	34

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher, Private School Teacher, and BIE School Teacher Data Files," 2007-08.

(n=1,101)

	Population	Sample Weighted	Sample Unweighted
Region			
Northeast	20	16	15
South	38	37	37
West	19	21	21
Midwest	23	26	27

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2007-08.

%Free Lunch (Teacher Estimates)

	Population	Sample Weighted	Sample Unweighted
0-49%	60	47	42
50-74%	21	26	28
75-100%	17	27	30
2% don't participate			

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher, Private School Teacher, and BIE School Teacher Data Files," 2007-08.

Gender

	Population	Sample Weighted	Sample Unweighted
Female	76	79	79
Male	24	21	21

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher, Private School Teacher, and BIE School Teacher Data Files," 2007-08.

Appendix C: Questionnaire

The current survey is based on a national random sample of 1,101 K-12 public school teachers. It was conducted by mail and online in fall 2011. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. An asterisk indicates less than one percent, and a dash indicates zero. See “Methodology” for a complete description of how the survey was conducted. The data for year 2007 come from *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform*; for year 2003 the data come from *Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think About Unions, Merit Pay and Other Professional Matters*.

	2011	2007	2003
	n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

1. Are you:

Male	79	79	78
Female	21	21	22

2. Do you currently teach at:

Elementary School	47	51	55
Middle School or Junior High	20	21	19
High School	31	27	23
Something else	2	1	3

3. For how many years have you been a PUBLIC school teacher?

Less than one year	*	-	
1-4 years	8	11	
5-9 years	19	20	
10-20 years	40	33	
21 years or more	33	37	

4. What subject or subjects do you primarily teach?

All subjects	32	31	
Art, Music, or Fine Arts	8	8	
Computer Science	2	3	
English and/or Reading	24	22	
Foreign Language	4	2	
Mathematics	22	19	
Physical Education or Health	2	9	
Science	16	14	
Social Studies or Social Sciences	17	16	
Something else	9	7	
Special Ed/Gifted	4	7	

	2011	2007	2003
	n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

How would you rate each of the following ideas for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers to the teaching profession? [Q5-9]

5. Actively recruit and train second-career candidates from other fields and sectors of the economy

Excellent	13	17	
Good	32	37	
Fair	32	30	
Poor	19	13	
Not sure	5	4	

6. Ease state certification requirements while intensifying in-class supervision, observation, and mentoring

Excellent	13	14	
Good	26	29	
Fair	27	26	
Poor	32	29	
Not sure	3	3	

7. Give teachers more time during the school day for class preparation and planning

Excellent	55	57	
Good	29	28	
Fair	9	11	
Poor	7	4	
Not sure	*	*	

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

8. Make it far easier to leave and return to teaching without losing retirement benefits

Excellent	35	44	
Good	34	34	
Fair	17	14	
Poor	9	6	
Not sure	5	3	

9. Offer new teachers substantially higher starting salaries in exchange for smaller pensions when they retire

Excellent	9	7	
Good	15	15	
Fair	24	23	
Poor	42	48	
Not sure	10	7	

How much would you favor or oppose giving financial incentives to each of the following: [Q10-14]

10. Teachers who consistently receive outstanding evaluations by their principals

Strongly favor	24	24	28
Somewhat favor	34	34	34
Somewhat oppose	17	18	13
Strongly oppose	24	21	20
Not sure	3	3	6

11. Teachers whose kids routinely score higher than similar students on standardized tests

Strongly favor	10	11	12
Somewhat favor	24	23	27
Somewhat oppose	24	25	24
Strongly oppose	40	39	32
Not sure	2	3	6

12. Teachers who receive accreditation from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Strongly favor	26	25	23
Somewhat favor	41	40	33
Somewhat oppose	15	16	16
Strongly oppose	13	15	18
Not sure	6	4	10

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

13. Teachers who specialize in hard-to-fill subjects such as science or mathematics

Strongly favor	23	17	14
Somewhat favor	35	37	28
Somewhat oppose	21	23	22
Strongly oppose	17	20	30
Not sure	4	4	6

14. Teachers who work in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools

Strongly favor	40	34	29
Somewhat favor	43	46	41
Somewhat oppose	8	11	12
Strongly oppose	7	7	13
Not sure	2	3	5

15. Suppose that in your district the students of some teachers make more academic progress – in terms of improved reading levels, teacher evaluations, and classroom tests – when compared to similar students taught by other teachers. How much would you favor or oppose financially rewarding those teachers?

Strongly favor	12	10	12
Somewhat favor	34	34	36
Somewhat oppose	19	22	20
Strongly oppose	30	29	25
Not sure	4	5	8

16. Some suggest that the best way to measure teacher effectiveness is to assess students' skills and knowledge when they first come to a teacher and to measure them again when students leave to see what progress was made. How would you rate this as a way of measuring teacher effectiveness?

Excellent	22	15	13
Good	32	34	36
Fair	24	29	29
Poor	19	20	18
Not sure	2	2	5

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

Think about your most recent formal evaluation. How close does each statement come to describing your own experience? [Q17-20]

17. *The evaluation was done carefully and taken seriously by administration*

Very close	48		
Somewhat close	30		
Not too close	11		
Not close at all	10		
Not sure	1		

18. *The feedback from the evaluation was meaningful and helped me improve my teaching*

Very close	28		
Somewhat close	34		
Not too close	20		
Not close at all	17		
Not sure	1		

19. *The rubric/criteria used for evaluation were fair and relevant*

Very close	37		
Somewhat close	40		
Not too close	13		
Not close at all	8		
Not sure	2		

20. *My students' standardized test scores were included as part of the evaluation*

Limited Base: n=914

Very close	6		
Somewhat close	10		
Not too close	12		
Not close at all	62		
Not sure	11		

21. *Which statement would come closest to describing your most recent formal evaluation?*

It was useful and effective in terms of helping you be a better teacher	33	26	
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2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

It was well intentioned but not particularly helpful to your teaching practice	35	32	
It was just a formality	32	41	
Not sure	1	2	

The next few questions are about tenure. Although "tenure" policies vary from state to state, for the purposes of this survey please think of a tenured teacher as one who has been awarded job protections and due process rights after successfully completing a probationary period, typically 2 to 4 years in length.

22. *Are you currently a tenured teacher, or not?*

Yes, a tenured teacher	63	64	
Yes, it's not called tenure, but I have job protections & due process rights	17	15	
No, not a tenured teacher	8	14	
No, there is no tenure at my school	10	6	
Not sure	2	2	

23. *In general, when you hear that a teacher at your school has been awarded tenure, which of these two thoughts would be more likely to cross your mind?*

Base: School has tenure n=989 n=972

That the teacher has proven to be very good at what s/he does	28	23	
That it's just a formality – it has very little to do with whether a teacher is good or not	63	69	
Not sure	9	8	

24. *If you had the choice, would you personally be willing to trade tenure for a pay increase (e.g., \$5,000 per year), or would the pay increase have to be A LOT higher, or would you rather hold on to tenure?*

Would trade tenure for a pay increase	30	28	31
Would have to be A LOT higher	31	27	26
Would rather hold on to tenure	25	26	29
Not sure	15	19	14

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

25. If you had the choice, would you personally be willing to trade tenure for more autonomy and control over decisions affecting your school, would it have to be A LOT more autonomy and control, or would you rather hold on to tenure?

Would trade tenure for more autonomy and control	15	12	
Would have to be A LOT more autonomy and control	22	18	
Would rather hold on to tenure	42	47	
Not sure	21	23	

26. Check the statement that best describes your current status:

I am a member of a teachers union or association that engages in collective bargaining	60	67	
I am a member of a professional association that provides such things as liability insurance, but not collective bargaining	20	15	
I am not a member of a teachers union or association	17	16	
There is no teachers union or association to join in my district	1	1	
Not sure	1	1	

Whether or not you are currently a member of a union or association, or whether collective bargaining exists in your district, please answer the remaining questions to the best of your knowledge. As a public school teacher, your opinion counts. If you feel a particular item is not applicable to you, please skip it and move on to the next one.

27. Do you think of teachers unions or associations as:

Absolutely essential	46	54	46
Important but not essential	40	31	38
Something you could do without	12	11	12
Not sure	3	4	4

28. Generally speaking, do you think that teachers unions or associations should:

Put more focus than they currently do on issues such as improving teacher quality and student achievement	43	32	
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2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

Mostly stick to traditional union issues such as protecting teachers' salaries, benefits, and jobs

42	52	
----	----	--

Not sure

15	16	
----	----	--

29. Today in your district, how would you describe the relationship between the teachers union or association and the district leadership? Is it mostly about:

Conflict and distrust	29	28	
Cooperation and trust	45	44	
There is no union or association	4	4	
Not sure	22	24	

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [Q30-37]

30. Teachers would have more prestige if collective bargaining and lifetime tenure were eliminated

Strongly agree	5	4	
Somewhat agree	17	17	
Somewhat disagree	21	23	
Strongly disagree	43	38	
Not sure	15	19	

31. Despite having the strength of their unions behind them, rank-and-file teachers usually have very little control over what goes on in their own schools

Strongly agree	32	32	
Somewhat agree	39	42	
Somewhat disagree	16	16	
Strongly disagree	6	4	
Not sure	7	7	

32. The union charges far higher dues than are warranted by what it does for teachers

Strongly agree	23	21	23
Somewhat agree	30	33	33
Somewhat disagree	20	19	16
Strongly disagree	17	15	19
Not sure	10	12	9

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

33. *The union regularly provides information and opportunities to help me be a better teacher*

Strongly agree	14	9	12
Somewhat agree	32	32	38
Somewhat disagree	23	25	25
Strongly disagree	20	21	19
Not sure	12	13	6

34. *The union sometimes fights to protect teachers who really should be out of the classroom*

Strongly agree	16	14	11
Somewhat agree	36	35	37
Somewhat disagree	19	18	17
Strongly disagree	12	10	12
Not sure	18	24	24

35. *Teachers facing unfair charges from parents or students would have nowhere to turn without the union*

Strongly agree	45	41	45
Somewhat agree	31	34	33
Somewhat disagree	13	12	11
Strongly disagree	5	5	5
Not sure	5	9	7

36. *Without collective bargaining, the working conditions and salaries of teachers would be much worse*

Strongly agree	47	44	54
Somewhat agree	30	31	27
Somewhat disagree	8	7	6
Strongly disagree	4	4	4
Not sure	11	15	10

37. *Without a union, teachers would be vulnerable to school politics or administrators who abuse their power*

Strongly agree	52	47	52
Somewhat agree	29	30	29
Somewhat disagree	8	9	8
Strongly disagree	5	4	4
Not sure	7	10	7

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

The next questions are about responsibilities that teachers unions or associations might take on. For each, please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does it or not. Then, answer the corresponding “If Yes” or “If No” questions. [Q38-47]

Base: School has union/association

38. *Effectively negotiate contracts, salary, and benefits on behalf of teachers*

a. *Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.*

Yes	70	76
No	18	13

b. *IF YES: How good a job is it doing?*

	n=766	n=755
Excellent	28	26
Good	41	42
Fair	23	25
Poor	8	6
Not sure	1	2

c. *IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?*

	n=180	n=142
Strongly favor	43	29
Somewhat favor	25	28
Somewhat oppose	13	12
Strongly oppose	9	13
Not sure	11	19

39. *Keep teachers updated on new instructional methods and curriculum*

a. *Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.*

Yes	38	41
No	46	46

b. *IF YES: How good a job is it doing?*

	n=417	n=410
Excellent	14	13
Good	44	39
Fair	32	33
Poor	7	10
Not sure	3	5

2011 2007 2003
n=1,101 n=1,010 n=1,345

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=478	n=474	
Strongly favor	23	24	
Somewhat favor	38	37	
Somewhat oppose	16	14	
Strongly oppose	14	13	
Not sure	9	12	

40. Negotiate to keep class size down in the district

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	52	55	
No	32	30	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=561	n=558	
Excellent	14	13	
Good	37	36	
Fair	32	28	
Poor	15	18	
Not sure	3	5	

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=338	n=320	
Strongly favor	53	56	
Somewhat favor	30	27	
Somewhat oppose	5	5	
Strongly oppose	4	4	
Not sure	8	9	

41. Protect teachers through due process and grievance procedures

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	84	84	
No	4	4	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=902	n=847	
Excellent	30	30	
Good	41	40	
Fair	15	19	
Poor	3	3	
Not sure	10	9	

2011 2007 2003
n=1,101 n=1,010 n=1,345

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=42	n=53	
Strongly favor	61	33	
Somewhat favor	18	29	
Somewhat oppose	5	4	
Strongly oppose	9	11	
Not sure	7	23	

42. Provide support and mentoring to new teachers

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	40	46	
No	40	38	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=439	n=462	
Excellent	24	18	
Good	37	39	
Fair	25	28	
Poor	9	7	
Not sure	6	8	

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=415	n=405	
Strongly favor	33	33	
Somewhat favor	41	33	
Somewhat oppose	8	12	
Strongly oppose	9	9	
Not sure	9	13	

43. Provide teachers with high-quality training and professional development

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	35	38	
No	47	46	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=390	n=386	
Excellent	20	14	
Good	39	41	
Fair	29	28	
Poor	7	10	
Not sure	5	7	

2011 2007 2003
n=1,101 n=1,010 n=1,345

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=492	n=474	
Strongly favor	27	27	
Somewhat favor	39	34	
Somewhat oppose	14	15	
Strongly oppose	11	11	
Not sure	10	14	

44. Expand the career ladder for teachers by negotiating new and differentiated roles and responsibilities

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	23	33	
No	49	44	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=246	n=333	
Excellent	15	12	
Good	31	31	
Fair	35	30	
Poor	12	14	
Not sure	8	14	

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=510	n=484	
Strongly favor	29	27	
Somewhat favor	40	38	
Somewhat oppose	10	8	
Strongly oppose	8	6	
Not sure	14	22	

45. Guide ineffective teachers out of the profession

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	10	15	
No	60	61	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=106	n=153	
Excellent	12	5	
Good	25	13	
Fair	25	21	
Poor	19	22	
Not sure	19	39	

2011 2007 2003
n=1,101 n=1,010 n=1,345

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=640	n=652	
Strongly favor	37	36	
Somewhat favor	31	30	
Somewhat oppose	9	9	
Strongly oppose	10	9	
Not sure	12	16	

46. Lead efforts to identify ineffective teachers and retrain them

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	11	17	
No	62	60	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=124	n=171	
Excellent	14	6	
Good	27	20	
Fair	29	22	
Poor	21	18	
Not sure	9	35	

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=647	n=630	
Strongly favor	35	34	
Somewhat favor	32	31	
Somewhat oppose	11	10	
Strongly oppose	15	11	
Not sure	7	14	

47. Negotiate new ways to more meaningfully and effectively evaluate teachers

a. Please indicate whether the union or association in your district currently does this or not.

Yes	39	41	
No	38	39	

b. IF YES: How good a job is it doing?

	n=416	n=410	
Excellent	16	11	
Good	36	34	
Fair	31	34	
Poor	12	11	
Not sure	5	10	

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

C. IF NO: Would you favor or oppose the union taking on this function?

	n=399	n=421
Strongly favor	43	36
Somewhat favor	33	36
Somewhat oppose	9	8
Strongly oppose	8	8
Not sure	8	12

48. Assume that teachers would keep some due process protection against unfair practices by administrators. If the union or association in your district were to take the lead on ways to simplify the process for removing clearly ineffective teachers who shouldn't be in the classroom, how much would you support or oppose the effort?

Base: School has union/association	n=988	n=967
Strongly support	35	22
Somewhat support	41	41
Somewhat oppose	7	10
Strongly oppose	6	7
Union already does this	1	2
Not sure	11	19

49. Which of these do you think is the most likely course of action a principal in your district would take if faced with a persistently ineffective teacher who was already past the probationary period?

Do nothing	16	14
Initiate formal proceedings to remove the teacher from the district's employ	22	18
Make a serious effort to retrain the teacher	26	26
Quietly encourage the teacher to leave	11	13
Transfer the teacher to another school in the district	13	14
Not sure	12	15

50. Assume that years of service and number of credits would still be taken into account. If the union or association in your district were to take the lead on negotiating a way to add teacher performance as a consideration when deciding an individual teacher's salary, how much would you support or oppose the effort?

Base: School has union/association	n=987	n=949
Strongly support	16	18

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

Somewhat support	33	34
Somewhat oppose	16	18
Strongly oppose	26	23
Union already does this	1	1
Not sure	8	8

51. Some school districts have a system for matching teachers with schools where any teacher, regardless of seniority, has an equal opportunity to fill a vacancy. It basically comes down to whether the teacher wants to work in the school and whether the school wants the teacher. If the union or association in your district was trying to move in this direction, how much would you support or oppose the effort?

Base: School has union/association	n=984	n=929
Strongly support	17	17
Somewhat support	33	31
Somewhat oppose	12	11
Strongly oppose	15	9
District already does this	6	4
Not sure	18	20

52. In some places across the country, local teachers unions are working with school districts to turn around low-performing schools. Do you think that local unions would probably be helpful partners in these efforts, probably get in the way, or that they would be irrelevant?

Probably be helpful partners	62
Probably get in the way	14
Would be irrelevant	12
Not sure	12

53. Which of these best describes what it means to you personally to be a member of a teachers union or association:

Base: Member of union/association	n=838	n=936
It provides feelings of pride and solidarity, in addition to the practical benefits	41	31
It brings practical benefits, not really any more than that	49	52
It is something that makes you feel uncomfortable	5	7
Not sure	5	10

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

2011	2007	2003
n=1,101	n=1,010	n=1,345

54. Other than receiving mailings and notices, how involved and engaged are you in the local union?

Base: Member of union/association	n=835	n=949
Very involved	10	6
Somewhat involved	28	18
Not too involved	34	35
Not at all involved	26	39
Not sure	2	2

55. As far as you know, did your school make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) last year or was it identified as a school in need of improvement? (For the school year 2010-2011.)

Made AYP	64
Identified as a school in need of improvement	32
Not sure	4

56. Did you enter teaching through an alternative certification program, or not? (An alternative certification program is designed to expedite the transition of non-teachers to a teaching career; it could be run by a state, district or university, or nonprofit.)

Yes, an alternative certification program	12
No, did not	87
Not sure	1

Sources:

Public Agenda, *Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think About Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters* (New York, NY: Public Agenda, 2003).

Ann Duffett, Steve Farkas, Andrew Rotherham and Elena Silva, *Waiting to Be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform* (Washington, DC: Education Sector, 2008).

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