

BACK TO SCHOOL

America's Teachers Need More Community, Parental Support

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The latest data from the Center for American Progress shows that the average salary for an attorney is more than two times that of elementary and middle school educators. The Washington Post reported last week that nearly 1 in 10 hosts

who rent out their apartments, homes and spaces on Airbnb are teachers. Low salaries, compared with other college graduates, may inhibit highly-effective professionals from pursuing a career in education; specifically for people of color who currently make up just seven percent of public school teachers.

I come from a family

of educators. My mother, both of my grandmothers, and one of my sisters were teachers. However, the family tradition of educating children ended after me. None of my daughters, nieces, or nephews decided to pursue a career in education. Data comprised from surveys completed during the NNPA's National Black Parents' Town Hall Meet-

ing echoed this sentiment. When asked what they believed is needed to close the academic achievement gap, respondents selected community participation and funding over the acquisition of highly-effective teachers.

Many reasons have led to frustrations with teaching in the United States. Work-to-pay ratio, a lack of resources, and an increased focus on standardized testing has made it increasingly difficult for teachers to be highly-effective.

This year, teacher strikes broke out in several states concerning school funding and teacher pay. Teachers in Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and

West Virginia left the classroom for the state house to protest the lack of resources in the profession. NPR reported in April that teachers have begun to seek support outside of the educational bureaucracy; forming "supply shops" where teachers can swap educational materials for free or at a dramatically reduced cost.

A first-year teacher who attended the National Black Parents' Town Hall Meeting in Norfolk, VA, said that she stepped into the role of teaching, initially excited, but found by the end of the year she was extremely drained physically and emotionally. "I stepped into the role, mid-year, with no lesson

plan. What can be done to keep teachers teaching and encourage new teachers coming into the program? I really want to teach, but there is very little support."

Highly-effective teachers require competitive pay, professional support, and access to innovative resources. President Barack Obama signed the current national education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December 2015 with educators in mind. Title II of ESSA provides program grants to states and districts that can be used for teacher preparation, recruitment and support.

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TheSkanner.com

Poll

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associate professor of education at Harvard University and a co-author of the report.

Nina Rees, president of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools said the findings "demonstrate through the educational choices they make for their children - families want high-quality charter school options for their kids.

"Above all else, parents care that their child has access to an excellent school, and as education advocates it is our job to ensure that wish becomes a reality," Rees added.

Support for publicly funded vouchers given to low-income families to help them pay tuition at private school rose from 37 percent to 42 percent over the past year.

The Education Department welcomed the results of the poll.

"The data consistently show that parents want more education options for their kids and when they are empowered with options, they like it and their kids benefit," said press secretary Elizabeth Hill. "Education freedom is the future."

Meanwhile, Americans seem to be more satisfied with their local police and the post office than with their neighborhood school. While 51 percent of respondents said they would give their local schools a grade of A or B, 68 percent gave the local post office a similar grade and 69 percent the local police.

African American respondents gave their local police much lower marks than other respondents, but their views of their local schools were even worse. Thirty-nine percent gave their local schools an A or a B, while the local police force received such marks from 43 percent of African-American respondents.

The study also found that many Americans



In this June 5, 2018, file photo, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos testifies during hearing on the FY19 budget on Capitol Hill in Washington. Support for charter schools and private school voucher programs has gone up over the past year, with Republicans accounting for much of the increase, according to a survey published Tuesday, Aug. 21. The findings by Education Next, a journal published by Harvard's Kennedy School and Stanford University, come as DeVos promotes alternatives to traditional public schools.

favor raising teacher salaries and increasing school funding in the aftermath of teachers walking out of schools in six states earlier this spring to protest pay and other issues.

Informed about average teacher earnings in their state, nearly half said they support raising teacher pay. That number was 67 percent when respondents were not told explicitly how much their local teachers were making. Nationally, the average teacher's salary was \$58,950 in 2017, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

"The sense of economic insecurity for teachers is very strong and there is growing support for higher pay, not just from teachers but from the broader community," said Evan Stone, CEO of Educators For Excel-

lence, a teachers' advocacy organization.

West said that while many believe teachers should be making more, there is disagreement over whether they should be compensated based on how much their students learn or using some other metric.

"To the extent that the debate moves from how much are teachers are paid to how they are paid, there is potential for continued conflict," West said.

The Education Next survey was based on interviews with 4,601 adults across the country. The margin of error was 1.4 percentage points.

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