

2017 FEDERAL POLICY SURVEY

National Network of State Teachers of the Year



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The National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) is a network of State Teachers of the Year and Finalists chosen by every state and U.S. territory as exemplars of the profession. Through our focus on policy, practice and advocacy, we use our teacher leadership to ensure that every student receives an outstanding education.

NNSTOY members represent every grade level from Pre-K through high school, and some teach college courses. We teach every subject area—from special education to middle school Spanish or AP Chemistry—in urban, rural and suburban schools. When NNSTOY members speak, we provide lawmakers and administrators with a unique perspective, one that springs from our teaching expertise and our strong passion for students and learning. We are committed to transforming our profession so that all students have access to an excellent education and great teachers.

*For our 2017 Federal Policy Survey, members provide clear and useful counsel in four key areas: **educational equity, teacher leadership, social and emotional learning, and vouchers and school funding.** We offer the findings as information for our public servants, who are charged with crafting legislation, policies and programs that support our nation's schools and best serve our students.*



Katherine Bassett

2000 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year
President and CEO
National Network of State Teachers of the Year



EQUITY

Equity for all of America’s students has long been a federal policy goal, but one that remains difficult to realize. Multiple provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—as well as civil rights laws and policies, and the mission of the U. S. Department of Education—require us to address inequity in schools. The goal of achieving educational equity requires policymakers, administrators, educators and the public to ensure that learners have the tools they need to maximize their potential. This includes access to high quality teachers, adequate funding and resources, meaningful and reliable assessments, and a school community that possesses the skills to tap into the funds of knowledge of the families they serve.

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As we move from ensuring that every student has the same tools and resources they need to succeed, we have to make an essential shift from *equality to equity*. Discussions of equity often raise issues concerning race, gender, disabilities and socioeconomic status. Exemplary educators go beyond being content specialists and talented pedagogues; we must be conscious and thoughtful members of a just society. Educators must have the data to be able to see where gaps in equity persist and be vigilant activists in bridging them.

While schools rightfully shoulder a significant part of the responsibility of ensuring equity, it is only through comprehensive approaches that include support for schools, families and communities, that we will achieve equity.



Jemelleh Coes
2014 Georgia State
Teacher of the Year



Percent who **Agree** or **Strongly Agree**

- 91% The federal government should require equitable funding for all schools.
- 85% States should implement ESSA with robust strategies for ensuring equitable distribution of experienced, in-field and effective teachers.
- 92% Schools should provide anti-bias professional development for teachers.
- 83% Federal policy should ensure access to education for immigrant students whose parents may be undocumented.
- 71% Federal policy should promote and fund state adoption of high learning standards and related assessments.

Exemplary teachers say:

- “A complete approach [to equity] must be considered, which includes education as one of several factors including housing, jobs and health care.”
- “I believe the best indicator of student success is parent involvement. The largest role the federal government can play is to support families financially, emotionally, and mentally to ensure parents have the time and resources to support their children's education.”
- “Provide realistic standards and financial assistance to reach those standards for *all* schools in *all* states, with proper accountability and transparency.”



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Teacher leadership through practice, policy and advocacy is at the heart of NNSTOY's vision for transforming the teaching profession. We do this work so that all students can live the lives they dream. Teacher leadership is first rooted in excellent teaching. Yet it also magnifies the scope of a teacher leader's work beyond a single classroom to make a difference to hundreds or thousands of children at a school, district, state, national or global level.

Unintended consequences are not simply a benign inevitability when it comes to crafting policy. Teacher leaders can help policymakers avoid the “collateral damage” of poorly crafted policy that harms the children whose entire lives, past and present, are shaped by their experience of school. Involving practicing teachers as partners in creating policy, not just

implementing it, is a proven way to ensure that any given policy works as intended for the children in our care. Almost all of our membership—99%—responded that federal policy should include ongoing, systematic and regular engagement with expert teachers about education policy. Yet only 19% agreed that they have had opportunities weigh in on how their state will implement ESSA.

Teachers have long been seen as consumers of policy, research, curricula and professional development. As teacher leaders, we are capable of far more than that.

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Justin Minkel
2007 Arkansas State
Teacher of the Year



Percent who **Agree** or **Strongly Agree**

- 98% Federal policy should include ongoing, systematic and regular engagement with expert teachers about education policy and practice, i.e. through legislation that provides for expert teachers to regularly advise legislators/policymakers on education policy.
- 19% Teachers in my state have had the opportunity to provide input into how social-emotional learning will be addressed in the state's ESSA plan.
- 91% Federal policy should promote and fund professional development systems that include time allocated in the school day for collaborative practice.



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

ESSA requires each state to include at least one indicator in its accountability system that measures school quality or student success. Many educators and states are considering the inclusion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills as that indicator; however, few survey respondents say they are involved in developing state ESSA plans related to SEL.

SELs have long been underestimated. These skills—resiliency, determination, empathy, problem solving, teamwork and cooperation—are more than necessary for an individual. They are the foundation of a free society that works as a whole. If we wish to create and live in a world where compassion, caring and kindness prevail, we must teach these necessary skills in our homes, our religious institutions, our civic organizations and in our schools.

“Survey respondents strongly agree that SEL should be explicitly taught, supported and embedded throughout the learning environment.”

Survey respondents across the country strongly agree that SEL should be explicitly taught, supported and embedded throughout the learning environment. These skills are critical to ensuring the success of all children. We can no longer assume that students magically acquire them. The time has come to endorse a systemic approach, providing equal opportunities where social and emotional learning skills are taught intentionally to all children.



Leigh VandenAkker
2012 Utah State
Teacher of the Year



Percent who **Agree** or **Strongly Agree**

- 98% Teaching non-cognitive skills has a positive impact on student learning.
- 96% State ESSA plans should take into account over-testing and unintended consequences when crafting SEL measures.
- 90% Teacher training on SEL would equip teachers to meet the diverse needs of students.
- 79% SEL is more likely to be effective when it is practiced consistently across districts and within schools.

Exemplary teachers say:

- “When we talk about educating our children, we should be talking about educating the whole child.”
- “Academic skills advance knowledge about a particular subject such as math. SEL skills provide tools to transfer, engage in and interpret the knowledge (i.e. problem solving, leadership, self-confidence, determination, grit.)”
- “What gets measured is what gets taught. We need to proceed with caution when testing the social and emotional skills. However, to not test them impedes the growth and importance of implementing these critical life skills.”
- “SEL skills, often referred to as 21st century skills, encompass qualities that are distinct from what are traditionally referred to as cognitive skills, and include personality, attitudes, and motivation. The deliberate teaching of these skills has successfully improved myriad outcomes, including general academic performance and achievement.”



VOUCHERS AND SCHOOL FUNDING

The topic of school choice has gained an increasingly prominent place in discussions of federal and state policy. Indeed, President Trump's FY 2018 education budget proposal envisions significant cuts for existing federal education programs while making new investments in school choice programs, including vouchers. School choice advocates argue that it empowers parents and creates opportunities for high need students, while a more competitive school market causes all schools to do better. Those who disagree say that funding school choice publicly is a path to privatization of public schools, creating a bifurcated system that weakens schools by withdrawing funding, avoiding accountability and undermining civil rights protections.

"...choice options (including charter schools and private schools) should have the same accountability measures as traditional public schools."

While many NNSTOY members agree that students and parents should have choices, 85% of survey respondents said they oppose the federal government providing school choice using vouchers. A strong majority (97%) of respondents believe that choice options (including charter schools and private schools) should have the same accountability measures as traditional public schools.

We believe that all students should have access to a high quality education and any school choice initiative should be considered in relation to meeting that goal.



Karen Vogelsang
2015 Tennessee State
Teacher of the Year



Percent who **Agree** or **Strongly Agree**

- 4.5% The federal government should provide greater school choice through vouchers.
- 97% Accountability measures should be the same for public schools, charter schools, and private schools that receive federal funds.

Exemplary teachers say:

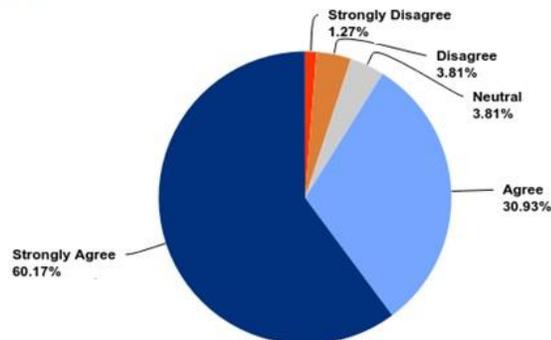
- “I am not entirely opposed to school choice; however, just simply increasing school choice initiatives does not ensure the quality of education in our public schools and may even hurt the students who remain in particular schools, either through choice or circumstance, by taking funding away from their needs.”
- “[Schools need] accountability if given federal funding.”
- “[Schools need] more equitable access to resources and funding.”
- “Recognizing the need for change and innovation, I don't see charter schools and voucher systems as the answer, but I do think that we have an imperative to re-imagine the way that we educate our youth.”



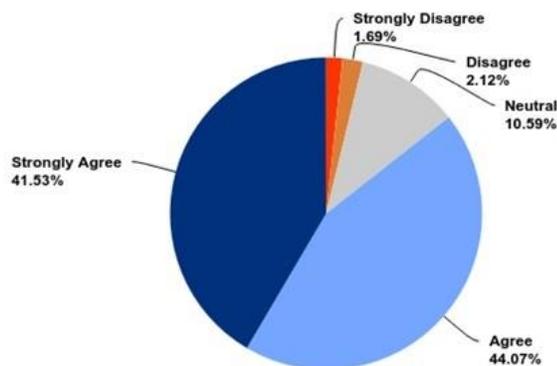
THE DATA

EQUITY

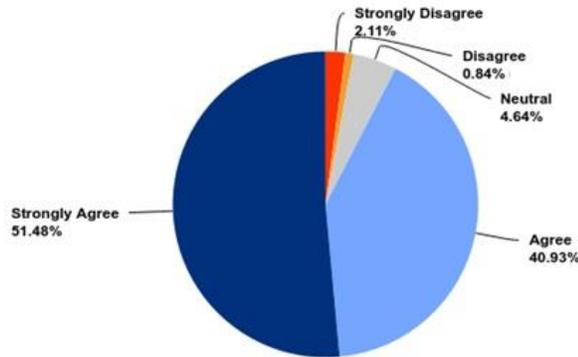
Federal policy should require equitable funding for all schools, including those that educate a high percentage of students of color and those living in poverty, with teacher salary included in calculations of whether funding is equitable.



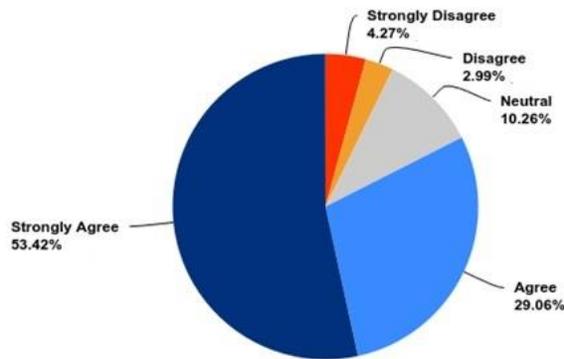
As states implement ESSA, robust strategies for ensuring equitable distribution of experienced, in-field and effective teachers should be routinely monitored for impact.



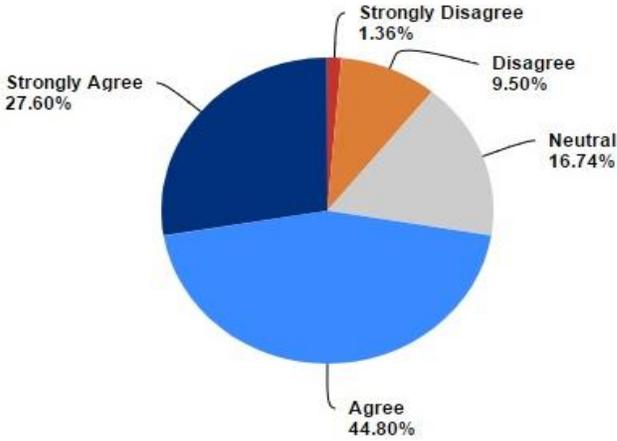
Schools should include anti-bias professional development for teachers; for example, becoming aware of our own biases and how they might impact our interactions with students and families.



Federal policy should ensure access to an education for immigrant students whose parents may be undocumented; for example, ensuring that schools are not obliged to report families to immigration authorities.

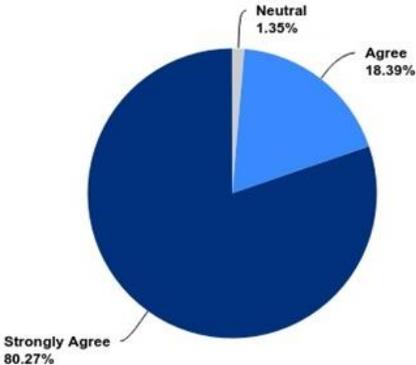


Federal policy should promote and fund state adoption of high learning standards and related assessments.

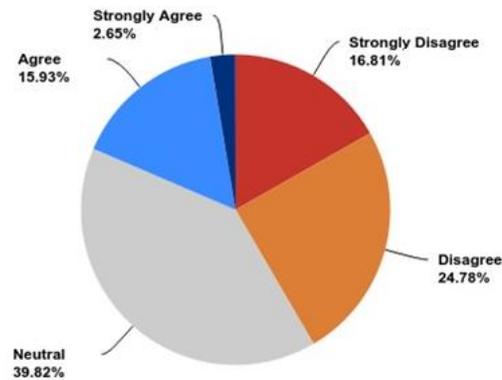


TEACHER LEADERSHIP

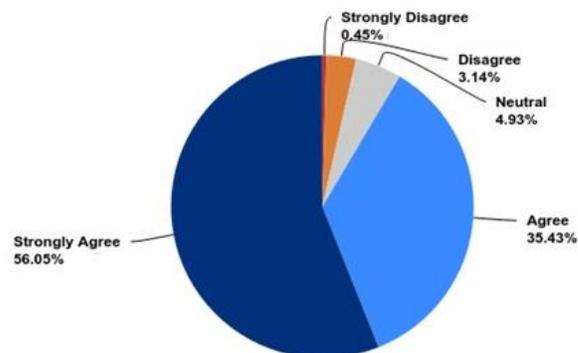
Federal policy should include ongoing, systematic and regular engagement with expert teachers about education policy and practice, i.e. through legislation that provides for expert teachers to regularly advise legislators/policymakers on education policy.



Teachers in my state have had the opportunity to provide input into how social-emotional learning will be addressed in the state's ESSA plan.

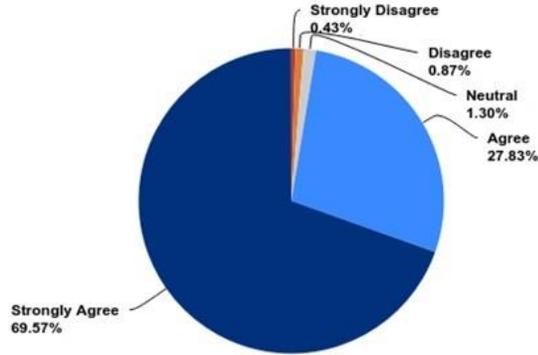


Federal policy should promote and fund professional development systems that include time allocated in the school day for collaborative practice.

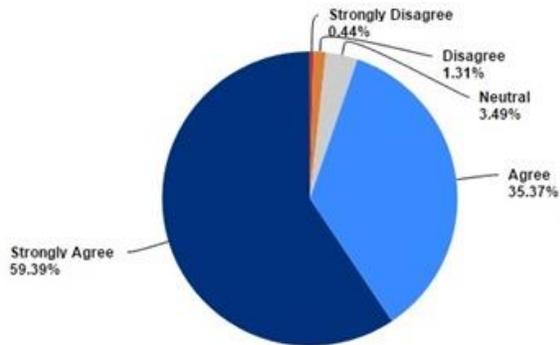


SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

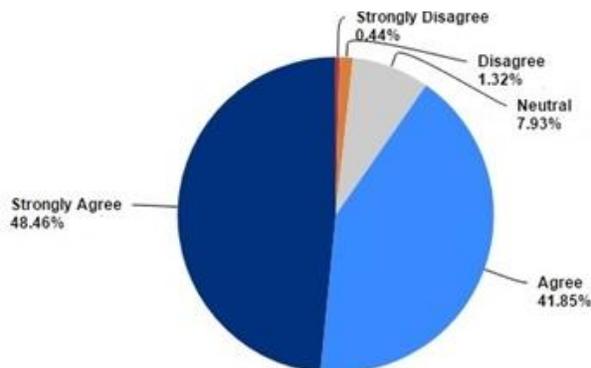
Teaching non-cognitive skills like collaboration, persistence and conflict resolution tends to have a positive impact on student achievement.



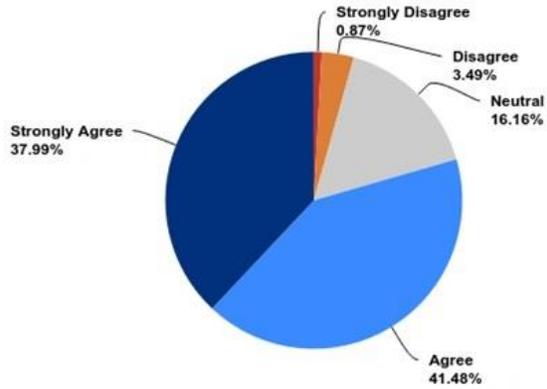
States' ESSA plans should take into account over-testing and possible unintended consequences when crafting measurements of social and emotional growth that may be used to evaluate schools and teachers.



Increasing training on social and emotional learning would equip teachers with the skills to meet diverse needs of students.

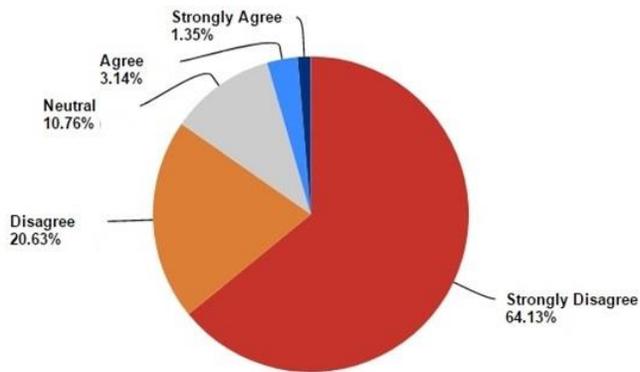


Social-emotional learning is more likely to be effective if its practice is consistent across districts and within schools.



VOUCHERS AND SCHOOL FUNDING

The federal government should provide greater school choice through vouchers.



Accountability measures should be the same for public schools, charter schools and private schools that receive federal funds.

