

Teachers Positive About Profession, Study Says

Teachers generally love their work, but they are unnerved by problems in the education system, according to a survey by Public Agenda.

The [study](#), “Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think about Unions, Merit Pay and Other Professional Matters,” revealed that the majority (76 percent) of teachers felt they have become scapegoats for all the problems facing education, and many said they felt little support from administrators or parents.

Still, teachers are generally positive about their profession. Even so, 78 percent admitted their own schools had at least a few teachers who were “simply going through the motions.” And a majority (59 percent) felt they were being unfairly held accountable for raising student achievement when much of what affects scores lies outside of their control.

The survey examined American teacher’s views on unions, tenure, pay-for-performance, alternative certification and other issues.

“Teachers come to the table with an acute sense that few understand the challenges they face and that many outside the classroom underestimate what is needed to improve student learning,” Public Agenda President Deborah Wadsworth said in a press release.

The survey showed that an overwhelming majority of teachers (87 percent) believed students should pass a standardized test to be promoted. But 53 percent felt the tests are seriously flawed. One in six said they would abandon testing completely.

Teachers favored some forms of merit pay based on their own performance, but they were skeptical of pay based on student’s scores.

Seventy percent of those surveyed supported financial incentives for teachers in tough neighborhoods with low-performing schools. And 67 percent said teachers “who consistently work harder, putting in more time and effort” should be paid more.

But when it comes to tying teacher’s pay to test scores, the numbers begin to drop.

Only 38 percent of teachers favored merit pay for teachers whose students “routinely score higher than similar students on standardized tests.”

Although most teachers favor merit pay, 63 percent feared it could cause “unhealthy competition and jealousy.”

And when it comes to unions, teachers see the value in them but rarely are satisfied with their unions.

Only 19 percent said the national union “almost always” reflected their values and preferences. However, 81 percent said their working conditions and salaries would be worse without collective bargaining.

The survey also revealed that high school teachers (27 percent) were less likely than elementary school teachers (42 percent) to feel confident about getting through to most of their students. Newer teachers were also more likely than veteran teachers to favor merit pay.