



## Why Parents Support Teachers

Parents Across America is pleased to stand with our nation's schoolteachers in efforts to improve education for all children – efforts that range from [the issues raised in the Chicago teachers' strike](#) to the [Seattle teachers' boycott of wasteful standardized tests](#). We are proud to be part of a long tradition of parent support for public schoolteachers.

### Parents voice support

Although this nation has been through three decades of hand-wringing over a “crisis in American education,” throughout that entire period national surveys have consistently demonstrated that parents respect and support their children's teachers.

- In 1987, [a MetLife survey](#) found that “parents reserve their highest ratings for the teaching staff at their children's school. Over 70 percent gave positive marks to the qualifications and competence of these teachers.”
- In 2003, [a Public Agenda overview](#) of public education surveys found that an overwhelming 85 percent of parents agreed that most teachers in their children's schools were committed to their profession and cared deeply about their students; and that 75 percent said that “all” or “most” of their child's teachers knew their subject matter very well.
- A 2012 [Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll](#) found that 71 percent of all Americans had trust and confidence in teachers.

### Parents act in support

Parents across the country have also stood actively in solidarity with teachers in efforts to improve children's educational experiences, and to combat ill-advised policies such as school closures and high-stakes testing.

- In January of 2013, shortly after teachers at Seattle's Garfield High announced that they would refuse to give a controversial set of standardized tests, the Garfield PTSA issued [a message of support](#), which stated that the PTSA “shares the concerns of the teachers at Garfield with the MAP testing and supports termination of these tests.”
- In the fall of 2012 Chicago parents walked picket lines with teachers who sought greater resources and better conditions for students, teachers and schools. [A survey taken during the strike](#) found that 66 percent of parents of Chicago public school children supported the strike.
- In the spring of 2012, a coalition of Florida parent groups joined teachers [to oppose](#) “parent trigger” legislation, [contributing to its defeat](#).
- In the spring of 2011, hundreds of Charlotte parents [petitioned school board and state leaders](#), seeking to head

off a massive expansion of standardized testing coupled with a problematic pay-for-performance scheme.

- In New York City, [teachers and parents have consistently stood together](#) in an ongoing struggle against the educational disruptions caused by school closings.

### **Ongoing challenges**

This is not to say that relationships between parents and teachers are always smooth. Systemic and/or historic issues such as individual and institutionalized racism and classism; language barriers; gender bias; cultural blinders and a variety of prejudices represent profound challenges and obstacles to positive parent-teacher relationships. Some teachers have little training in how to work with parents, especially low-income parents of color. Because of the limits of survey methodology, the opinions that low-income parents hold of their children's teachers may in fact be significantly under-represented in surveys. These are all areas that call for careful analysis and significant efforts to improve.

However, it is also important to note that many low-income parents also think highly of their children's teachers, and that problems faced by families and children at high-poverty schools generally stem more from [teacher inexperience and revolving-door teacher turnover](#) than from the shortcomings of teaching veterans. This turnover has been exacerbated by measures such as the expansion of high-stakes testing and the denigration of teaching professionals, which are championed by the "corporate reform" movement but opposed by most parents.

### **Unfounded accusations**

Despite the depth of parent support for teachers, parent groups such as Parents Across America are occasionally accused of being "fronts" for teacher unions, rather than genuine representatives of parent opinion. This accusation appears to spring from supporters of the "corporate reform" movement, which takes the ideologically driven position that "bad" teachers and teachers' unions are the major obstacles to improving American schooling. Parents Across America has consistently worked to combat the spread of this false ideology because it diverts resources, energy and attention from [measures that would genuinely improve schooling](#) in our country.

### **Conclusion**

Parents and teachers, who deal with the on-the-ground realities of schools and classrooms day in and day out, have a particularly valuable vantage point on educational improvements. Yet both parent and teacher perspectives are too often ignored in education reform discussions. While parent and teacher groups do not always agree, our best chance to be heard is to speak together on those issues where we find common ground, to oppose unproven, damaging education strategies and to support positive, research-based reforms supported by adequate funding. Parents Across America is proud to support teachers in these efforts.

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