**T**his year the AAE is celebrating its tenth anniversary and it has been an “E-Ticket” ride! Those of you who visited Disneyland in the old days will remember that the most thrilling rides required an “E-Ticket” for admission. Indeed, these past ten years have been a roller coaster of ups and downs. Many of the downs will be reflected in the pictures throughout this special edition of Education Matters. Most of the downs can be credited to our “competitors,” the NEA and AFT. “Competitors” is their term, not ours. They still don’t seem to understand that the AAE was formed as a professional alternative to unionism, not as an alternative union. Then again, maybe they do! At times we are still surprised at the lengths they will go to try to keep teachers from hearing about the AAE. However, there are signs that it is dawning on them that the AAE is here to stay. John Cameron Swazy’s old television commercial slogan for Timex could sum up the past ten years for the AAE, “Takes a licking and keeps on ticking!”

It might be good at this point to remind you that membership in labor unions is waning. Even the unions’ own internal reports confirm that fact. Conversely, membership in nonunion, independent, professional educator associations is continuing to flourish. I don’t have to tell you why that is. I’m just proud to be a part of this movement and am more optimistic than ever that it will continue to grow dramatically over the next decade.

During the next five years, more new teachers will be entering the profession than over the past twenty due to retiring baby boomers. The AAE is creating a new vision of what a career in teaching can be, which should capture the hearts and minds of this new generation of teachers. In that regard, you will begin to notice some changes at the AAE that are intended to connect with the new millennium teachers. Stay tuned!

We are excited about what the future holds for the AAE and for public education. It is true that we could have grown even faster if we had taken the safe route of trying to protect the status quo, as the unions have. However, educators cannot continue to stick their collective heads in the sand and hope the problem of low public esteem for our public education system will just go away. Reform initiatives suggest charter schools, alternative certification, merit pay, and competency testing, are not going away. They, too, are here to stay. The public wants them, and the new millennium teachers aren’t afraid of them. It seems to us that it would be best to get out in front and lead real reform instead of fighting tooth and nail to try to stop the inevitable. Working with the leaders of the reform movement to ensure that our members’ concerns and views are not only considered but also adopted, makes much more sense and will better serve America’s teachers and children.

Be sure to read the new member survey opinions on pages 5 and 6. The comments from active classroom teachers underscore the fact that the major problems in our public education system have not changed much over the past ten years. The defenders of the status quo keep insisting that more money (much more money) is the answer to all of our problems. That seems to make sense and, certainly, we must find ways to increase funding to repair or replace decaying school buildings; buy more books, computers, and supplies; and increase teachers’ pay. However, it is also a deceptively self-serving answer. Until the entire public education system is turned upside down, so that new funding can actually get to the classroom and not be soaked up by bureaucracy, more money could actually exacerbate many of our problems. It is an economic reality that the more we subsidize something, the more of that something we get. Our major problems are systemic problems. That is where external pressure from some of the more controversial “out of the box” reform initiatives could help and should be given a shot. Charter schools, as an example, could show us the way toward eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and give teachers the freedom they need to teach.

Over the next ten years, we will do all we can to return our public school system to what was once its unquestionable status as the world’s best. America’s children deserve nothing less.

I hope you enjoy this pictorial anniversary edition. It is a depiction of our personal efforts to serve you—the members of the Association of American Educators.
Charter member Cheryl Andersen is congratulated by members of AAE home office staff. (left to right) Bobette Craycraft, Kelley Autry, Cheryl Andersen, and Sandra Huntsman. Cheryl was the very first teacher to join the AAE and is celebrating our tenth year with us!

Professional Educators of Iowa Director Jim Hawkins and wife, Judy, with President elect George W. Bush at a “Meet the Candidates” forum hosted by PEI.

Professional Educators of Tennessee (PET) staff members at state conference. Left to right—Executive Director Walter Jewell, Insurance Administrator Alissa Schutz, Gov’t. Relations Director William Gemmill, President Billie Hamilton, and Director of Legal Services Larry Crain.

Pieterke Beckner, AAE home office administrator, on the left, and AAE Foundation Board member Becky Norton Dunlop at Becky’s office in Washington, D.C. Becky is the vice president for External Relations at the Heritage Foundation.

The late Steve Allen (center), guest speaker at a PEI-sponsored character education conference in Iowa. Left to right—Billie Ray, Jim Hawkins, Steve Allen, Judy Hawkins, and former Iowa Governor Robert Ray.

Gary Beckner presenting retired Congressman William Goodling, former chair of House Education and the Workforce Committee, an award at a Keystone Teachers Association conference in Pennsylvania.
The AAE has placed a strong role in helping to bring about some welcomed changes to NCLB. At its request, a number of states have met with their Department of Education officials to look for more effective ways to implement NCLB without placing undue burdens on teachers. This feedback was accepted by the U.S. Department of Education, and to the Department’s credit, we are beginning to see some of the suggested changes taking place.

The AAE was formally commended by both the USDOE and the U.S. House of Representatives. It was publicly acknowledged that instead of stonewalling NCLB (as a number of other teacher organizations have done), the AAE is at least trying to work with the USDOE to make the rules and regulations of NCLB more reasonable. NCLB is, after all, the law of the land. However, there is still much work to be done to make the application of NCLB fair as possible for teachers and school districts. We will continue to work with the Department over the course of the next four years toward that goal.
Karen Norton (2002 Arkansas State Teacher of the Year), the new director of Arkansas State Teachers Association, and Kristen Boswell, ASTA (Associate) at the D.C. office.

From Coast to Coast!

Our new office in the Washington, D.C. area.

Karen Norton (2002 Arkansas State Teacher of the Year) and Kristen Boswell, ASTA (Associate) at the D.C. office.

What's Wrong with Public Education Today?

• Things are permissible in school today that were once considered criminal.
• Politicians, many who know nothing about education, are dictating the curriculum.
• Society's problems of broken families and crime are a very long reach for many children.
• Too much emphasis placed on the ideas of "social studies" to the neglect of math and science.
• Too much paperwork and government regulations.
• Untrained teachers are not let go. Unskilled teachers are not let go.
• The educators who are in it for the right reasons. That the government mandates an impossible level of "highly qualified teachers." Some teachers earn their paycheck…but not a shame they don't improve their teaching because they want to achieve excellence.

• Every administrator in each district should be getting the top pay rather than admins.
• Merit increases! Although the process would make more than we do!
• Let teachers have more of a voice. Let teachers be part of the decision making process.
• Improved teacher preparation programs; increased amount of tax payers' money being misspent.
• Increased amount of tax payers' money being misspent.
• Taking on more of the social/behavioral aspect of education.
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1996 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

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2004 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

What Educational Issues Most Concern You?

• Untested, unproven ideas (like new math).
• Too much emphasis placed on the ideas of "social studies" to the neglect of math and science.
• Reinstate ability grouping for higher academic achievement.
• The educators who are in it for the right reasons. That the government mandates an impossible level of "highly qualified teachers." Some teachers earn their paycheck…but not a shame they don't improve their teaching because they want to achieve excellence.

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1996 New Member Survey

What's Wrong with Public Education?

• Teacher preparedness (teacher preparation programs)
• "Highly qualified teachers requirement"
• Class sizes too large!
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From Coast to Coast!

Karen Norton (2002 Arkansas State Teacher of the Year), the new director of the Arkansas State Teacher of the Year Program, and Anna Nagel (AAE Education Research Associate) at the D.C. office.

What's Right with Public Education?

• Taking on more of the social/behavioral discipline, evaluation). 2) Curriculum planning by school boards, instead of teachers and students of multiple skill levels (interdependent instruction).

What Can Be Done to Correct the Problem?

• Let teachers have more of a voice. Let them make decisions about school policies and procedures, impact of discipline policies, etc.

• Require from teachers more knowledge of students, some kind of student assessment, not just the passing of tests.

• Empowering teachers to teach and discipline their students.

• Providing adequate job security. A lot of teachers don't want to stay in the profession because they feel they are not valued.

• Teachers aren't held accountable for their actions. If a teacher has a child expelled, the parents can sue the district, but not the teacher.

• Root out unnecessary and inefficient paperwork.

• Provide teachers with proper training and support before they are thrown into the classroom.

• Providing teachers with more time to teach and work with students, not administrative duties, lunch, etc….

• Letting us know that we are important, not just a number.

• A program to monitor and support the growth of a teacher, not just a yearly evaluation.

• Empowering them to make decisions about their work environment.

• Lack of proper research and evaluation of things that have been done for years.

• Underpaid, overworked teachers are still being recruited into the profession. What's the incentive for teachers to stay in education if they are underpaid and overworked?

• Providing more opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities.

What's Right with Public Education?

• Things are permissible in school today that would have led to a suspension 10 years ago.

• The educators who are in it for the right reasons—those with a genuine desire to help students, who care more about education than money. They are the minority, but they do exist, and they deserve for their tireless efforts in the classroom.

• Public schools must have the same ability as private schools do to get rid of trouble makers and delinquents (drug dealers and such) in their school systems.

• Public education provides, for many, the only option for education. From Coast to Coast!

What's Wrong with Public Education Today?

• The overwhelming majority of responses included: 1) 

• 1) Honesty about student's progress in class. 2) Classroom behavior. 3) Curriculum changes. 4) Discipline. 5) Testing. 6) Allowances of disruptive students.

• Taking on more of the social/behavioral discipline, evaluation). 2) Curriculum planning by school boards, instead of teachers and students of multiple skill levels (interdependent instruction).

• Providing adequate job security. A lot of teachers don't want to stay in the profession because they feel they are not valued.

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1996 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

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1996 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

What Can Be Done to Correct the Problem?

A majority of the respondents felt that allowing local communities to set their own education standards—teachers and parents would work together to set standards for the local schools and local districts—would solve the problem. Fewer than one in ten respondents felt that federal intervention was necessary.

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2004 Association of American Educators New Member Survey

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The AAE was formally commended by both the USDOE and the U.S. House of Representatives. It was publicly acknowledged that instead of stonewalling NCLB (as a number of other teacher organizations have done), the AAE is at least trying to work with the USDOE to make the rules and regulations of NCLB more reasonable. NCLB is, after all, the law of the land. However, there is still much work to do to make the application of NCLB fair and possible for teachers and school districts. We will continue to work with the Department over the course of the next four years toward that goal.

AAE: Your Voice in Washington, D.C.

AAE Board meeting. First row, left to right: Tracey Bailey, Pat Pelli, Scott Heronick, and Gary Beckner. Back row, left to right: William Kilpatrick, Tom Fleming, Kevin Ryan, and Eric Buehrer.

CONFERENCE AND SYMPOSIUMS

AAE Foundation-sponsored public symposium in Kansas to promote support for “Core Knowledge” curricula. Dr. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., president of Core Knowledge Foundation.

AAE Board meeting in Berea, KY.

Ginger Tinney, executive director of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators (APOE), and Gary Beckner, AAE Director, are pictured with former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. The two APOE state leaders were invited by Secretary Paige to attend the Research-to-Practice Summit in D.C.

AAE Board meeting in Berea, KY. Left to right—Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, AAE President Mary Kimmons; State Superintendent of Education/Chief Fiscal Officer, Kentucky; and Gary Beckner at an AAE conference in Berea, KY.

Tracey Bailey at USDOE press conference.

Betty Minton, board member of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators, addresses conference sponsored by the Keystone Teachers Association at Harrisburg, Pa.

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First AAE Board meeting. Front row, left to right: Tracy Bailey, Pam Eddy, Patti Howard, and Larry Beckner. Back row, left to right: William Kopfstein, Tom Fleming, Kevin Ryan, and Eric Buehrer.

Gary Beckner (on the left), and Gary Brand, Advisory Board member and former National Teacher of the Year—attending the Association of California School Administrators Conference in Monterey, California.

Audience at APOE’s first annual conference addressed by Governor Keating.

Speaker at another AAE and Link Institute conference in Washington D.C. Standing, left to right: Dr. Constance Jones, Gary Beckner, Peg Murphy, Kent Conrad, and Dr. Mary Beth Klee at Drake University.

Dr. Kevin Ryan, AAE Board member and former director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, teaching at AAE and Link Institute conference on character education at the University of California at Berkeley.

Ginger Tinney, executive director of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators (APOE), addresses conference sponsored by the Keystone Teachers Association in Edmond, OK.

AAE Advisory Board member Eric Buehrer, President of hard work for the Association of Professional Educators (APAOE), driving home a point at Focus on the Family conference in Boulder, CO.

Ginger Tinney, executive director of the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators (APOE), awards the Founders of Freedom Award to the Arkansas State Teachers Association at the APOE Annual Conference in Harrisburg, PA.

AAE Advisory Board member Eric Buehrer, President of the Association of Professional Educators of Virginia, addresses conference sponsored by the Virginia Professional Educators (VPE) at Focus on the Family conference in Colorado Springs, CO.

First Annual Office Christmas Party.

First AAE Board meeting. Front row, left to right: Tracy Bailey, Pam Eddy, Patti Howard, and Larry Beckner. Back row, left to right: William Kopfstein, Tom Fleming, Kevin Ryan, and Eric Buehrer.
Congressional, Legislative, and Policy Activities

Patricia Ann “Pann” Baltz, AAE Board member and 1993 Disney Teacher of the Year, testifying before Congress on “Parents, Schools, and Values.”

Secretary Richard Riley hosts a U.S. Department of Education meeting with Teachers of the Year, including (in the back row) AAE members Steve Levy, Rita Wigfield, and Tom Fleming, and Pann Baltz (seated).

Left to right—Cindy Omlin (director of the Northwest Professional Educators), Gary Beckner, (AAE executive director), Tim Callahan, (director of public relations for Professional Association of Georgia Educators), testifying at Congressional event sponsored by Alexis de Tocqueville Institute.

Ruth Green, executive director of Kentucky Association of Professional Educators (KAPE) and Dr. Michael Poliakoff, director of education programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities at AAE conference in Gettysburg.

AAE members chosen as panelists for the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) examination process. Pictured left to right: Bertha Zapata, Tampa, FL; Karen Norton, Warren, AR; Karen Stroud, Murfreesboro, TN; Ken Evans, Vancouver, WA; Dr. Kathleen Madigan, President, ABCTE; Retha Nance, Wheatland, OK; Betty Minton, Anadarko, OK; Sandra Crandall, Fountain Valley, CA.

AAE Advisory Board Member Polly Broussard (pictured in the center) being sworn in as a duly elected member of the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Polly also serves as the executive director of Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana.
Looking to the future! Gary Beckner with future AAE member! Ava is Jim and Judy Hawkins’ granddaughter. As a matter of fact, the AAE has a solid future if our staff members’ children become teachers. Leading the pack are Tracey and Rosemary Bailey with eight children, and Randy and Karna Hoffman (Board members of Keystone Teachers Association), with six!

Some AAE state leaders “enjoying” a lecture tour of Gettysburg National Battlefield during an unexpected cold snap in April.

Tracey Bailey, AAE director of National Projects, leads meeting at Gatlinburg retreat.

A little “blue grass” in the Smokey Mountains, Gatlinburg, TN.

AAE Board member Gene Bedley draws a lot of attention with his teaching techniques! Gene was the 1986 PTA National Educator of the Year.

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