

SPOTLIGHT

It's Teacher Appreciation Week. Flowers? Mugs? We're Looking for Something More | Education Week

In a year unlike any other, Teacher Appreciation Week isn't bucking the trend. Across the nation, educators were speaking up this week, calling attention to the many ways the pandemic exacerbated challenges facing the profession. In [EdWeek](#), a group of teachers stated pointedly "in a year where we went from being hailed as heroes who should be paid \$1 million a week to being denounced as the people blocking school buildings from reopening, we need more than flowers or a #1 teacher mug."

Indeed, many education advocates, experts, and practitioners echoed the sentiment. The [Education Trust - West](#) said teacher appreciation ought to be expressed through both words and actions this year in a post amplifying policy recommendations surfaced by California teachers, which include comprehensive professional development focused on mental health and institutionalized racism, more active roles in school decision making, and "more [financial support](#)." EdNote, the policy-orientated blog from the Education Commission of the States, built on the desire to see teacher needs met with action, calling out a [number of investments in teacher workforce pipelines](#) across the nation that are increasingly being considered by districts and states, including comprehensive recruitment and retention plans and using data to drive teacher staffing decisions. In many places, states are considering ways to signal appreciation for teachers while meaningfully addressing hurdles amplified or set by the pandemic - like [Georgia](#), where teachers will receive a \$1000 "pandemic bonus." Even with the move, officials are asking: "Will it be enough?"

In this most unusual school year, however, one [tradition](#) continued: the selection of the National Teacher of the Year. After four finalists reflected on the "[worst year ever](#)," Las Vegas elementary and special education teacher [Juliana Urtubey was awarded the top recognition](#). Urtubey represents just the third special education teacher to have received the honor and says that she plans to use her platform to advocate for improved English learner education and for greater roles for teachers in policymaking.



IN THE NEWS

Q&A: Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn Discusses the Need for More (and Better) Data to Guide Efforts in Helping Students Catch Up After the Pandemic | The 74 Million

Even as education leaders, experts, and advocates continue to stress the importance of collecting actionable, [comparable](#) data on student learning during the pandemic, states and districts are [still struggling to develop clear assessment plans](#), according to new analysis from the Center on Reinventing Public Education. Even worse, large swaths of students are expected to not participate in annual testing this spring in states like [California](#). Across government, advocacy organizations, and the business community, however, there are growing concerns that large gaps in student assessment data could harm or hinder long-term recovery efforts. Data Quality Campaign President and CEO Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, who also served as chief achievement and accountability officer for Baltimore City Public Schools, said the data will be [instrumental as officials guide the use and spending of billions of dollars in relief funding](#). "Having that comparable data allows state leaders to ensure that resources and supports are going to where they are most needed," she wrote. In Boston, [prominent business leaders issued a](#)

[defense of Massachusetts' MCAS exam](#). “Now is the time to earn our position as a leader among states by welcoming data from as many sources as possible” and that data would be key in addressing inequities, they argued.



Leveraging American Rescue Plan Funds to Advance Literacy: A Step-by-Step Guide for States and Early Reading Advocates | NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality published a reporting providing step-by-step recommendations for states seeking to direct some of their COVID stimulus funding towards improving flagging literacy rates. NCTQ's Kate Walsh and Elizabeth Cohen note that a third of all children entering fourth grade are unable to read at a basic level and that, with billions of dollars available for expanded programming, the “application of evidence based instruction can reduce that number to as low as 5%.” The report recommends policies for advancing literacy outcomes, including state and district considerations on teacher licensing and development. The report comes as [Florida is the latest state to act on literacy](#), with Gov. Ron DeSantis signing a pair of bills to expand accountability measures placed on early learning programs and tighten literacy standards in teacher training.



THE QUICK LIST

[Five Things Our Military-Connected Children Need From Washington](#) | Forbes.com

[Report: Teacher Salaries Increase While the Wage Gaps Dip](#) | Diverse Education

[How Teachers and Curriculum Will Shape Ed Tech's Future: A CEO Makes the Case](#) | Education Week

[Researchers Agree the Pandemic Will Worsen Testing Gaps. But How Much?](#) | Education Week

[The Education Data That Matter Most to Parents and School Stakeholders](#) | Center for American Progress

[To Rebuild Trust With Families, Education Department Seeks Input From Outspoken Parent Advocacy Group](#) | The 74 Million

[Online Tutoring Program Cuemath Launches In The U.S.](#) | Forbes.com

[Spending on Special Education in Some Districts Plunged This Year. Budget Cuts Could Be Next](#) | Education Week

[Can \\$800M Help Reconnect Homeless Students with Schools?](#) | K12 Dive

[Education Department Launches Reopening Resource Site](#) | Inside Higher Ed

[Virus, Technology, Unrest Make Stressful Year for Teachers](#) | AP News