

Teachers in the News

Public Agenda

Media analysis, focus group, and survey methodologies

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To better understand how teachers are portrayed in the news media, Public Agenda conducted research that consisted of a media analysis, focus groups, and a nationally representative survey of American adults, including a representative sample of K-12 public school teachers.

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For more information about this methodology, please contact research@publicagenda.org.

Media Analysis Methodology

Selecting the newspapers: In order to examine newspaper coverage of K-12 education from 2009 to 2020, Public Agenda selected five national newspapers (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA TODAY*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post*) and five local newspapers (*New Haven Register*, *Florida Times-Union*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *The Gazette* (Colorado Springs), and *Salt Lake Tribune*), Public Agenda analyzed 1,296 national articles and 1,020 local articles.

The national newspapers selected include the five US daily newspapers with the highest print circulation, according to data from the Alliance for Audited Media conducted by the *Press Gazette*.¹

The local newspapers were selected based on a variety of factors, including circulation; geographic diversity; the population of each city or region that the newspaper covers; the demographics and other characteristics of the local K-12 public school system, including race/ethnicity, graduation rates, percentage of students who are English Language Learners, percentage of students who qualify for free or price-reduced lunch, and the median household income of the school district. In addition, local newspapers were chosen to avoid including publications owned by Gannett, so as to avoid including in the sample articles that might have also been published in *USA TODAY*.

¹ William Turvill, "Top 25 US newspapers by circulation: America's largest titles have lost 20% of print sales since Covid-19 hit," *Press Gazette*, August 25, 2021, <https://pressgazette.co.uk/biggest-us-newspapers-by-circulation/>.

Building the dataset: Public Agenda created an initial dataset that contained metadata² on about 59,000 articles from these ten newspapers. Metadata for articles were included in the dataset if the article fit the following criteria based on ProQuest’s searches and filters: U.S. news stories that included the phrase “Teacher” or “Education” in the body or title, published between 2009-2020, and identified as having one of the subject classifications listed below.

Subject classifications for articles are provided by newspapers themselves, not by ProQuest.

- Academic Achievement
- Academic Failure
- Academic Grading
- Academic Standards
- Accountability
- Achievement Tests
- Advanced Placement Program
- Art Education
- Black Students
- Bullying
- Catholic Schools
- Charter Schools
- Cheating
- Class Size
- Classrooms
- Core Curriculum
- Curricula
- Disabled Students
- Education
- Education Policy
- Education Reform
- Educational Evaluation
- Educational Leadership
- Educational Technology
- Educational Vouchers
- Elementary School Students
- Elementary Schools
- Enrollments
- Expulsions & Suspensions
- Gifted Education
- Graduation Requirements
- Graduations & Commencements
- High School Graduates
- Hispanic Students
- Kindergarten
- Labor Unions
- Magnet Schools
- Mathematics Education
- Mathematics Teachers
- Middle School Students
- Middle Schools
- Minority Students
- Music Teachers
- No Child Left Behind Act 2001-US
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Quality Of Education
- School Administration
- School Attendance
- School Boards
- School Buildings
- School Buses
- School Choice
- School Closures
- School Discipline
- School Districts
- School Dropouts
- School Employees
- School Finance
- School Lunches
- School Principals
- School Safety
- School Schedules
- School Superintendents
- School Systems
- School Violence
- Schools
- Science Education
- Secondary School Students
- Secondary Schools
- Special Education

² Metadata is descriptive data about each article that was provided by ProQuest. Metadata included but was not limited to article title, author, publication title, publication date, and classification codes.

- Standardized Tests
- Strikes
- Students
- Teacher Education
- Teacher Evaluations
- Teachers
- Teaching
- Tenure
- Truancy
- Union Leadership
- Urban Schools

All metadata was cleaned to remove duplicate articles. All articles in this sample frame were then assigned an ID and a sample of articles was randomly selected to be screened by trained individual coders to determine whether they qualified for inclusion in the final dataset.

Developing the codebook and coding the data: The codebook was developed through an iterative process by the research director and associate research director at Public Agenda. A preliminary codebook was drafted to include variables of interest based on background research and focus-group discussions. Batches of about 20 articles were each coded by the research director and the associate research director. Preliminary codes were discussed and the codebook was refined. This coding and refining process continued until the research director and associate research director reached interrater reliability with a final codebook (see below).

Once the codebook was finalized, five coders, including one Public Agenda employee and four temporary research assistants, were trained to code the articles. Using Cohen's Kappa, each coder was tested for interrater reliability and coders were only classified as reliable if $K > .80$ across all individual variables and the coder had an average $K > .90$ across all variables. Coders who reached interrater reliability across most individual variables, but did not reach reliability across all variables, were paired together and double coded articles. Coders were paired to ensure each variable had at least one reliable coder. For example, if a coder was reliable on how often teachers were represented in the article, but not on the article theme, they were paired with a coder who was reliable on themes. Discrepancies between coders on articles that were double coded were reviewed and resolved by the associate research director after she had reached reliability.

Selected articles were screened by coders and only included in the final dataset if they met the following criteria: the article was in news, and not an opinion piece, commentary, obituary, or other; 75 percent of the paragraphs in the article mentioned K-12 education, current or past K-12 teachers or events that took place on K-12 school property; and 75 percent of the paragraphs in the article referred to K-12 education in the United States. The final dataset included 9 articles per month across all 12 years for each of the five national newspapers, and 17 articles per year for each of the five local newspapers. A total of 1,296 national articles and 1,020 local articles were included in the final database.

Coded data for each article was entered into Alchemer to create the final database. Every article was coded across 10 variables. Articles in which the word teacher or specific teachers were mentioned in at least two paragraphs were coded across 20 narrative variables, 3 of which had

additional subcodes as noted in the codebook. Multiple narratives could be applied to each article.

Media Analysis Codebook:

Description	Coding
Does at least 75 percent of the article focus on a specific geographic region?	Yes/No
Does at least 75 percent of the article focus on charter schools?	Yes/No
Does at least 75 percent of the article focus on private schools?	Yes/No
Are any current or retired public, private, or charter school teachers quoted?	Yes/No
Are any teachers' union representatives or union leaders quoted who are not also teachers?	Yes/No
Are any other people quoted (non-teachers and non-union representatives/leaders)	Yes/No
Are any of the following policies mentioned in the article: No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Every Student Succeed Act, or Common Core?	Yes/No
Is COVID-19 mentioned or not?	Yes/No
What is the main theme of the article? Only one of the following themes was applied to each article:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Buildings, equipment, and repairs ○ Evaluating students, teachers, or schools ○ Extracurricular activities and parent/community involvement in schools ○ General budgeting ○ HR and personnel for non-teacher positions (e.g., principals, superintendents, school board members, chancellors) ○ Illegal activities or lawsuits ○ Nonacademic factors that affect students learning, including access, enrollment, and school closures ○ Teacher hiring, pay, or teacher labor negotiations, or teacher labor actions ○ Teaching and learning, or teacher training

<p>How often are teachers represented in the article?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers are not mentioned or named at all or are mentioned or named in only one paragraph in the article ○ The word “teacher” or specific teachers are mentioned or named in two or more paragraphs in the article, up to 49 percent of the paragraphs in the article ○ The word “teachers” or specific teachers are mentioned or named in 50 percent of the paragraphs in the article up to 74 percent of the paragraphs in the article. ○ The word “teacher” or specific teachers are mentioned or named in 75 percent or more of the paragraphs in the article
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Teacher narratives codes Base: Articles in which the word “teacher” or specific teachers are mentioned in at least two paragraphs	
No narrative	Yes/No *If article is coded as no narrative, no other narrative codes could be applied
Specific examples of teachers teaching in their classroom, how teachers teach, or specific examples of what they are teaching in their classroom	Yes/No
Teachers being trained or needing to be trained, and professional development	Yes/No
Teachers are evaluated with standardized tests or other ways that may or may not be fair	Yes/No
Teachers are involved in sports, extracurricular or other organized activities in the school but outside of classroom teaching	Yes/No
Teachers dealing with administrative issues that negatively affect students	Yes/No
It is difficult to fire bad teachers	Yes/No
Teachers need more classroom resources	Yes/No
Teachers negotiating, getting, or needing more salary or other benefits	Yes/No
Teachers strikes or other labor actions	Yes/No
There is a shortage of diverse teaches	Yes/No
There is a teacher shortage	Yes/No
Teachers dealing with issues that affect students in school or students learning	Yes/No

Teachers expressing their own beliefs or ideas in the classroom or with students	Yes/No
Teachers have to deal with or may have to deal with mass layoffs due to budget issues	Yes/No
Teachers helping the community	Yes/No
Teachers dealing with guns/other weapons in schools, specifically:	Yes/No
Base: Articles that are about teachers dealing with guns/other weapons in the schools	Yes/No
Teachers deal with shootings/other violence	
Base: Articles that are about teachers dealing with guns/other weapons in the schools	Yes/No
Teachers taking preventative measures around guns/weapons in schools	
Teachers dealing with COVID-19 and related health concerns or policies including teacher testing, teacher quarantine, teacher illness, and teacher death	Yes/No
Teachers doing illegal things, specifically:	Yes/No
Base: Articles that are about teachers doing illegal things	Yes/No
Cheating on tests	
Base: Articles that are about teachers doing illegal things	Yes/No
Drug use	
Base: Articles that are about teachers doing illegal things	Yes/No
Embezzlement	
Base: Articles that are about teachers doing illegal things	Yes/No
Partaking in sexual acts	
Base: Articles that are about teachers doing illegal things	Yes/No
Other	

Teachers leaving the profession (not because they were let go), specifically:	Yes/No
Base: Articles that are about teachers leaving the profession Leaving the profession in education entirely	Yes/No
Base: Articles that are about teachers leaving the profession Retiring	Yes/No
Base: Articles that are about teachers leaving the profession Working in a different role in education	Yes/No

Focus Group Methodology:

Prior to conducting the media analysis and survey, Public Agenda conducted three focus groups with demographically diverse groups of adults (ages 18+) and five focus groups with demographically diverse groups of K-12 teachers.

Adult focus groups were conducted December 10 to December 12, 2019, in Charleston, West Virginia; Chicago, Illinois; and Columbus, Ohio. Teachers focus groups were conducted March 10 to March 18, 2020, in Lexington, Kentucky; Chicago, Illinois; and New York, New York. Although all focus groups were scheduled to take place in person, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York focus groups were conducted virtually through an online platform. The focus groups helped inform the media analysis and survey development.

Survey Methodology

Survey findings are from a nationally representative survey of 3,130 adult Americans 18 years and older, excluding private school teachers. The survey was fielded November 11 to December 1, 2020, by NORC at the University of Chicago.

The sample includes 2,684 respondents who were randomly sampled from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak panel, of whom 256 were K-12 public school teachers, including charter school teachers. Interviews were conducted online and over the phone, with 2,548 completing via the web and 136 completing via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. Another 446 K-12 public school teachers, including charter school teachers, were sampled from Lucid, a non-probability opt-in panel. The Lucid sample included 295 Black and Latino teachers. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference, online only.

The general public sample was demographically weighted to the 2020 Current Population Survey, and the teacher sample was weighted to the 2017-18 National Teacher and Principal Survey. The margin of error for the total sample is +/-2.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval. For the teachers sample, the margin of error is +/-5.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval. For parents, the margin of error is +/-5.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval.

For the survey topline with full question wording, please go to www.teachersinthenews.org or email research@publicagenda.org.



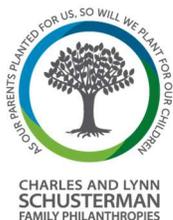
About Public Agenda

Public Agenda is a national nonpartisan organization dedicated to creating a better, more inclusive and informed democracy for everyone. Through research, engagement and communications, Public Agenda focuses on building trust and opportunity, raising up the voices of the public, and bridging divides to facilitate progress. Areas of focus include K-12 education, higher education, health care, economic opportunity, and democracy. Find Public Agenda online at PublicAgenda.org, on Facebook at facebook.com/PublicAgenda and on Twitter at [@PublicAgenda](https://twitter.com/PublicAgenda).



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The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation is a nonpartisan, private charitable foundation that advances ideas and supports institutions to promote a better world. For more than 50 years, they have supported efforts to advance education for all, preserve the environment, support vibrant performing arts, strengthen Bay Area communities, make the philanthropy sector more effective, and foster gender equity and responsive governance around the world.



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Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies (Schusterman) strives for a future in which the United States and Israel live up to their highest ideals and achieve more just and inclusive societies. They work to advance racial, gender and economic equity in the U.S., as well as to foster a more joyful and diverse Jewish community. In Israel, they work toward a secure homeland for the Jewish people, a thriving democracy and an inclusive society that cares for its most vulnerable. They aim to drive and support long-term systemic change through investments in leaders, organizations and U.S. public policy.