

# THE WORTHY EDUCATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 28, 2026 Contact: Walter McKenzie, [walter@theworthyeducator.com](mailto:walter@theworthyeducator.com)

## The Worthy Educator Unveils Results of its 2026-2027 Survey of Ed Advocacy Priorities

**WASHINGTON, DC (8/28/26)** -The Worthy Educator, a mission-driven nonprofit community dedicated to mid-to-late career educators working to have impact and build legacies that inform and transform the future of education announces the results of its third annual survey of educator advocacy priorities.

The survey was administered during the month of August, inviting educators everywhere to share their priorities in advocating for what is best for children, and for what is best for education as a public institution and a cornerstone of democracy. “This year we had our biggest response rate yet,” shared Walter McKenzie, founder of The Worthy Educator. “People have had time to process what is happening in education, and the implications for not acting,” he added, “so the priorities are becoming more clear, and they are becoming more targeted in what’s important to education professionals.”

Areas of emphasis among respondents included thirty-eight distinct hot topics in education, including Accountability, Assessment, Burnout, Career Advancement, Class Size, Compensation and Benefits, Curriculum, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Education for Sustainable Development, Funding and Resources, Literacy, Parent Engagement, Respect and Recognition, Restorative Practices, Safety, Social Justice, Special Education, Staffing Shortages, Wellness, and Working Conditions.

“The top five priorities communicated by Worthy Educators,” McKenzie shares, “actually include six this year, as two important priorities tied for fifth. These are, in order from one to five:

1. Preservice and Inservice Professional Learning, 2. Wellness, Mental Health and Burnout, 3. Preparing Students for their Future, 4. Leadership Development, and 5. Building Community Support for Schools, which tied with 5. Artificial Intelligence Literacy.” Ranking is determined by the frequency with which each item occurs in educator responses, both from predetermined lists and open-ended questions.

These findings indicate a shift from previous years’ results, reflecting the realities of dwindling oversight, support and resources. “Interestingly enough,” McKenzie elaborated. “When asked about their levels of optimism for current work and the future of the profession, educators with the most years on the job expressed more hope than respondents with fewer years in. Also, educators responding typically gauged their individual work situation, on average, 2 to 3 points higher than their rating of the status of the profession as a whole. This is consistent with one-on-one and small group discussions we have with educators on an ongoing basis.”

*On the final day of your career, when you close your office door  
that one last time, what do you want your legacy to be?*

**Here is a sampling of respondents' narrative responses, providing context and insight:**

*Public education should support those who make it happen. Teachers need help.*

*I fear we have broken our system in that we've signed up for bipolar switches of priorities and support for public education every four years. If I knew how to address it, I'd be running for office! We need to find a way to get legislation in place that doesn't get lost in the sauce of specific standards and watermarks for student learning but instead is governed and steered by ethical and core values to help us steer by in a world of constant change.*

*Developing leaders builds capacity, improves relationships, impacts systems/procedures and, if done effectively, can build growth mindsets.*

*Understanding what makes teachers stay and/or select positions at schools is the key to keeping them.*

*My top priority is addressing staffing shortages. Every aspect of a successful school depends on having highly qualified, dedicated educators and support staff. When schools struggle to recruit and retain teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and administrators, the impact is felt immediately through larger class sizes, fewer intervention services, increased staff burnout, and reduced opportunities for students.*

*Retention should be viewed as equally important as recruitment. Schools that prioritize collaboration, shared leadership, work-life balance, and recognition of staff contributions are more likely to retain high-quality educators. When educators feel supported, students benefit from stronger relationships, consistent instruction, and improved academic outcomes.*

*As a teacher, when I walk to the classroom worried about my ability to put food on the table, how can I teach?*

*Artificial Intelligence is my top priority because it is already reshaping teaching, assessment, curriculum design, school leadership, and even the meaning of academic integrity. However, I believe AI should not be addressed only as a technology issue. It should be addressed as a leadership, ethics, equity, and pedagogy issue. I believe The Worthy Educator can help by creating research-informed resources, practical educator guides, leadership conversations, and case studies showing how AI can support human-centered education rather than replace it.*

*We need legislation to address how schools ensure basic safety - locks on the inside of all doors, for example - all the way up to mental health and gun control.*

*Developing leadership among educators requires overcoming multiple professional challenges. The emphasis should be on transforming education as a continuous process that strengthens educator resilience in changing contexts.*

*On the final day of your career, when you close your office door that one last time, what do you want your legacy to be?*

*Public educators need to be valued, seen, and appreciated for who they are and what they give to education.*

*In order for me to stay past the five-year mark, there would have to be an influx of respect from administrators, better overall systems in place and reduction in workload. While these outwardly tend to be focuses and buzz words in many conversations, presentations, and even policies, once the doors are closed the workload still continues to get worse. I feel many administrators outwardly say that they support reducing teacher workload, but their actions speak otherwise. I want more opportunities to educate myself and enhance my strengths and not be forced to complete their professional development requirements. More opportunities for teacher leadership are necessary as well. I'd be happy to continue this conversation and support better systems for teachers and their students in any way that I can!*

*I'm not in public education right now. I'd love to get back in, but honestly, with the people in charge right now in my state (Texas) and in the country, I just can't see hitching my wagon to that star. I need to be able to rely on my job to be stable.*

*For me to remain in public education long-term, the profession must become more sustainable and better supported. While I continue to find tremendous purpose in serving students, families, and staff, the increasing demands placed on school leaders and educators*

*School leaders need the opportunity to lead instruction instead of spending a disproportionate amount of time on operational and administrative responsibilities. When principals can devote more time to coaching teachers, engaging with students, and partnering with families, schools become stronger learning communities.*

*There needs to be a stronger alignment between vision and working conditions. Educators are often asked to deliver transformation while working within systems that give them limited time, support, autonomy, and recognition.*

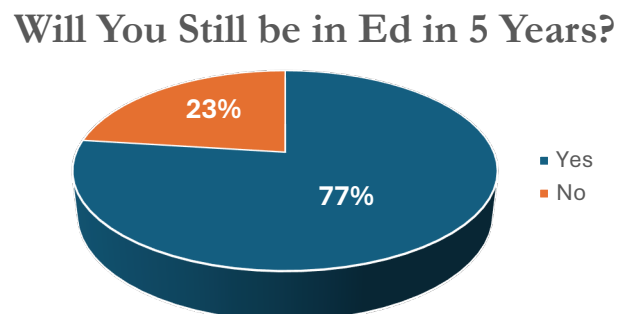
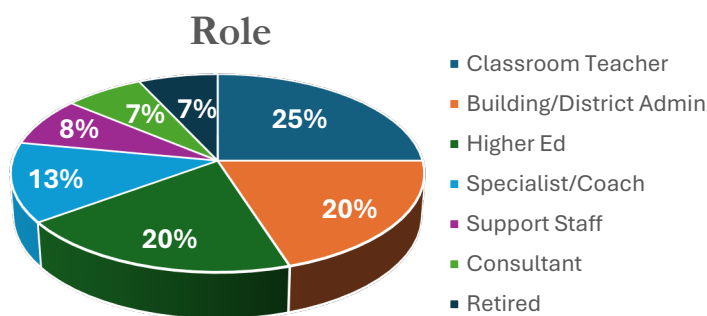
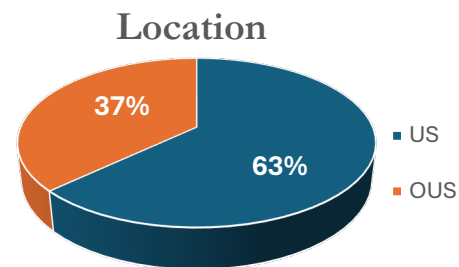
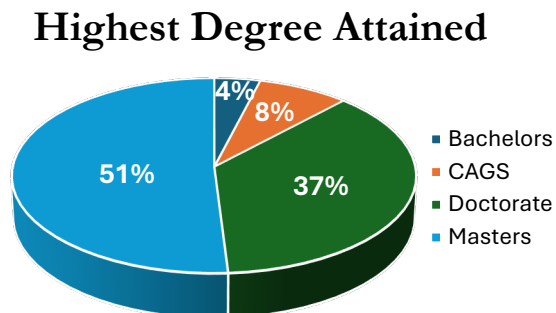
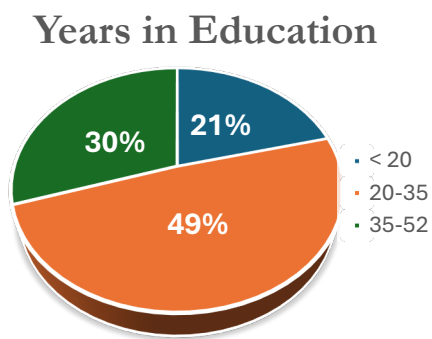
*It's necessary to promote greater competence, increased collaboration, and renewed ambition focused on educational transformation.*

*I plan to stay, however, it's challenging to feel like I'm doing the right thing in promoting teaching for my college students when there are so many issues at play and challenges in the profession. I definitely don't sugarcoat things for them, but I also want them to believe that teaching/ education are the future and that it can make a difference.*

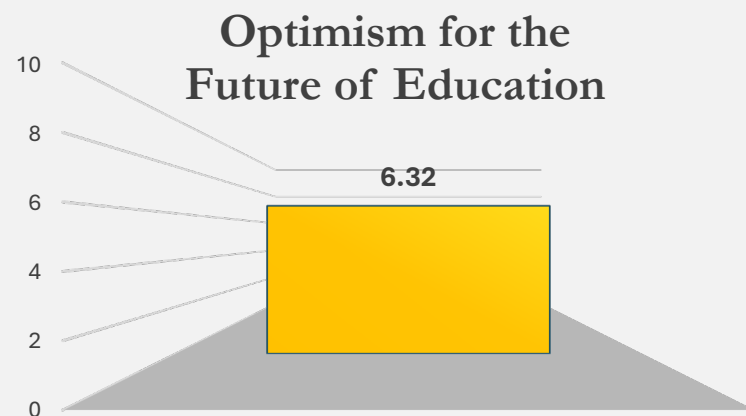
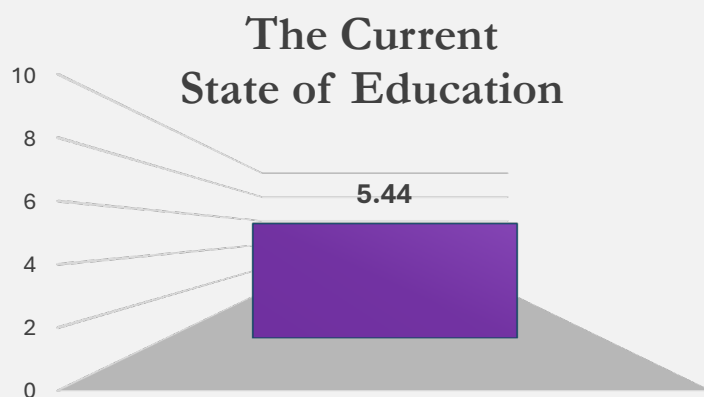
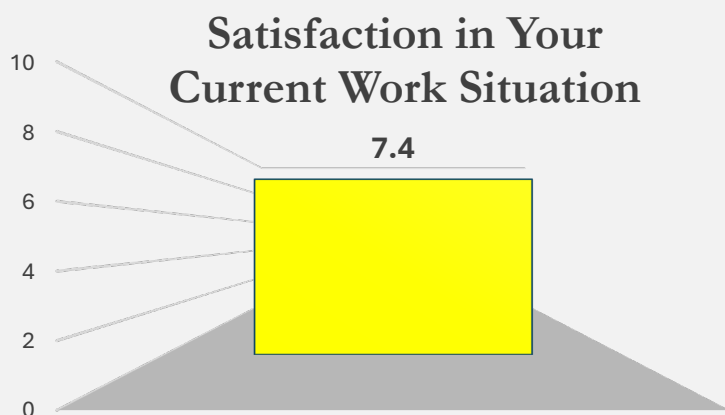
The Worthy Educator is an incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit community dedicated to serving mid-to-late career educators working to build legacies of success. To learn more about how you can become a part of this thriving, caring community, visit [theworthyeducator.com](http://theworthyeducator.com) to read more and get involved.

*On the final day of your career, when you close your office door that one last time, what do you want your legacy to be?*

# Respondent Data



## Ratings on a Scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent):







**YOU SPOKE - WE LISTENED!**

**ED ADVOCACY**

**PRIORITIES FOR 2026-27**

**1. PRESERVICE  
AND INSERVICE  
PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING**



**2. WELLNESS,  
MENTAL HEALTH  
AND BURNOUT**



**3. PREPARING  
STUDENTS  
FOR THEIR  
FUTURE**



**4. JOB-EMBEDDED  
LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT**



**5. BUILDING  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT FOR  
SCHOOLS**



**5. ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE  
LITERACY**



**THE WORK  
CONTINUES!**

**ROADMAP 2031**