

To: NEA
From: GBAO
Date: August 31, 2021

Member Tracking Poll: COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates And School Reopening

With the vast majority of schools now open for full-time, in-person instruction or planning to reopen for full-time, in-person instruction when they begin the school year, four major findings emerge from our most recent survey of NEA members:

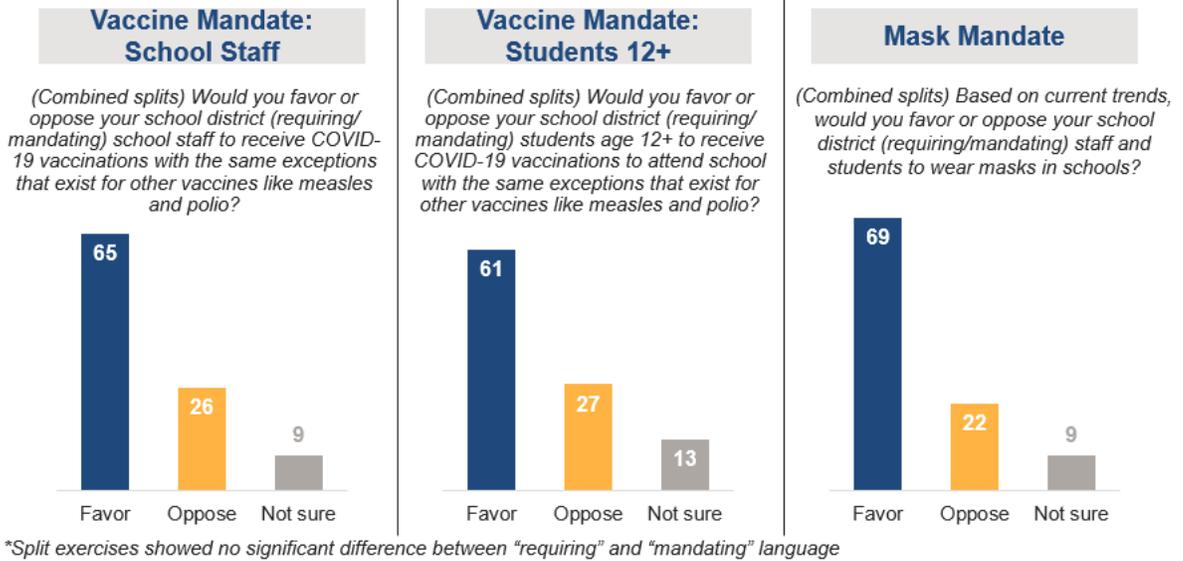
- 1. Majorities of members favor vaccine and mask requirements for both staff and students age 12 and over.**
- 2. Unlike a year ago, when most members were opposed to reopening for full-time, in-person instruction, a majority now support full reopening.**
- 3. Educators want COVID-19 safety measures in place to protect themselves and their students.**
- 4. The pandemic has taken a toll of educators, with members reporting increased stress and observing more colleagues leaving the profession or retiring compared to previous years.**

The following are key findings from a nationwide poll of 2,807 educators who are members of the National Education Association.

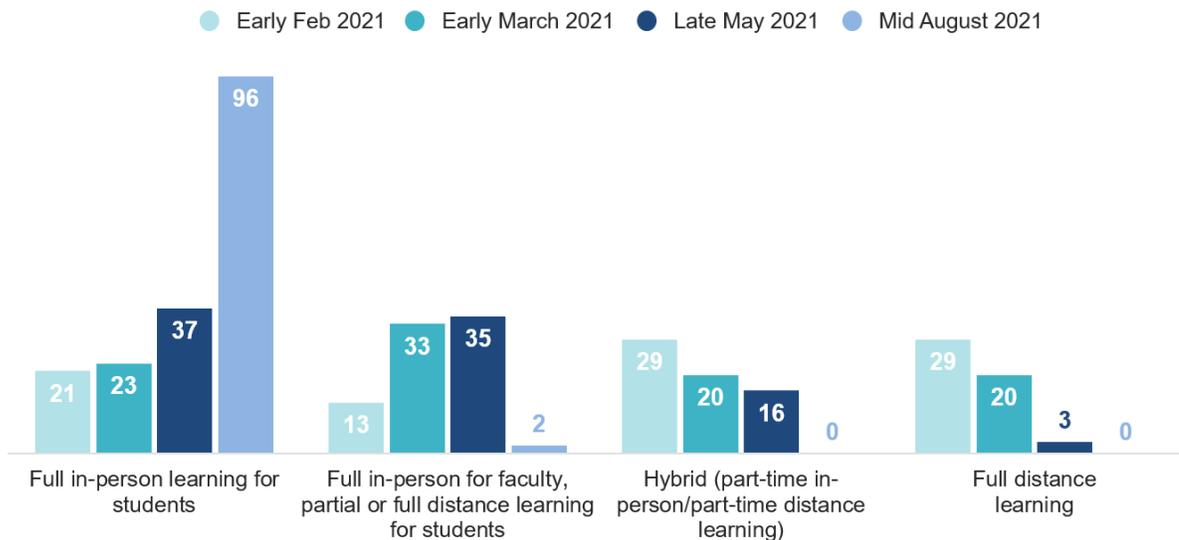
Key Findings

- The majority of members support vaccine and mask requirements in schools.** Members support their school district requiring/mandating school staff (65 percent favor, 26 percent oppose) to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. A smaller majority also supports requiring/mandating students age 12+ (61 percent favor, 27 percent oppose) to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. Members also support their school district requiring/mandating staff and students to wear masks in schools (69 percent favor, 22 percent oppose).

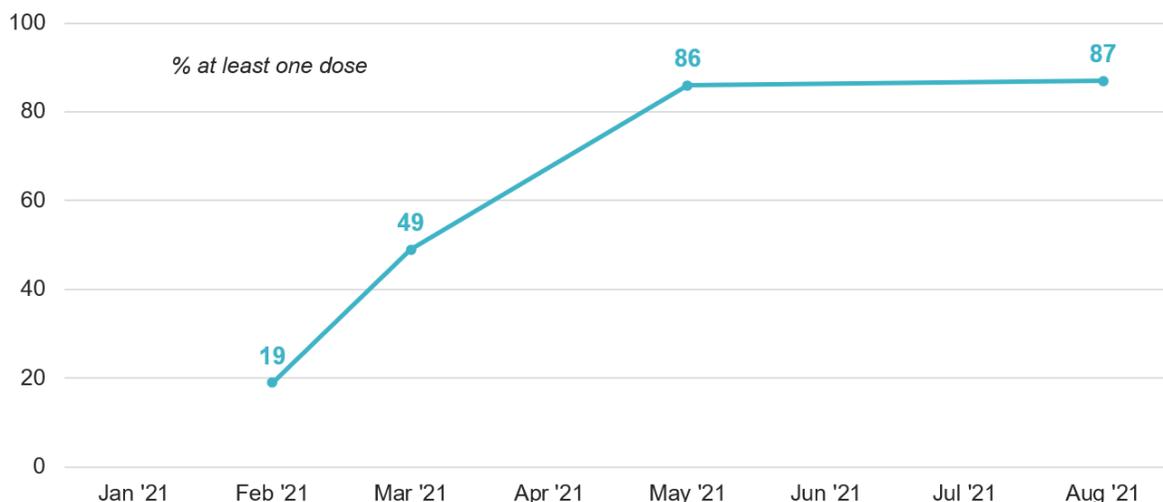




- Nearly all members and students are going to school in-person full-time this fall.** Among members who had started their school year when they took the survey (35 percent), most (97 percent) say their students are learning in-person full-time. Among those who had not started school yet but whose district had announced a fall plan, most say their districts plan to be open full-time in-person in the fall (95 percent).

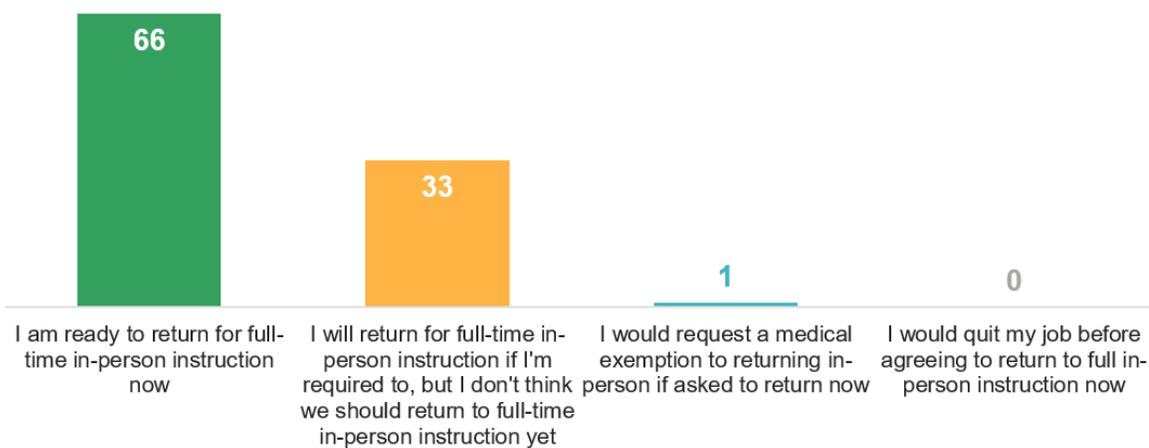


- Vaccination rates among members are much higher than among the general public, but increases are tapering off.** Most members (87 percent) have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, compared to 86 percent in May.

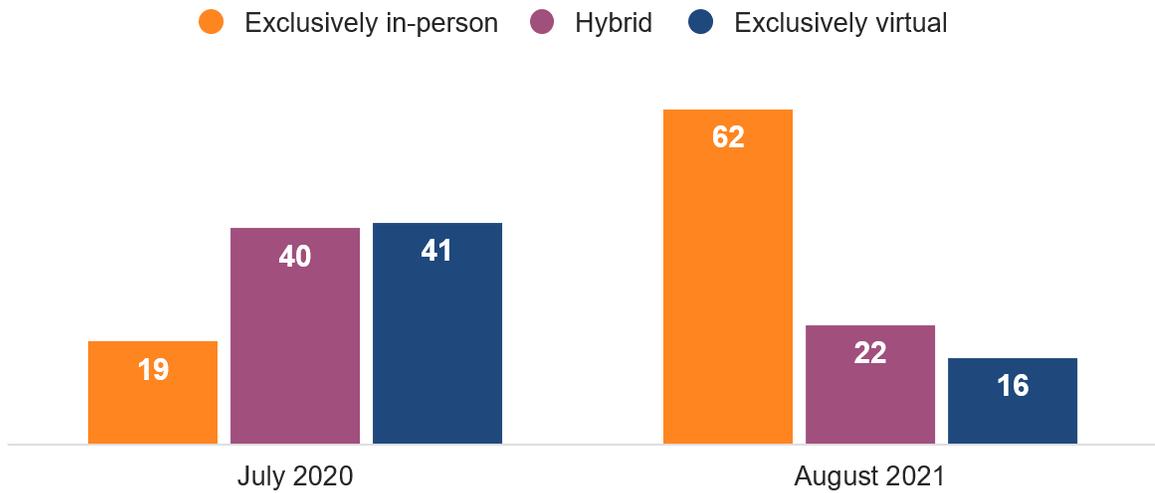


- A majority of members are ready for full-time in-person instruction, while others will return if required.** Similarly, a majority of members prefer to be exclusively in-person at the start of the school year (62 percent), while the remaining members prefer to be hybrid (22 percent), or virtual (16 percent). This is much different from a year ago, when members were split between wanting to do hybrid or virtual instruction.

(Split) Based on the way things are trending now, which of the following best describes how you feel about teachers, other school employees, and students returning to school for five days a week of full-time, in-person instruction this fall?



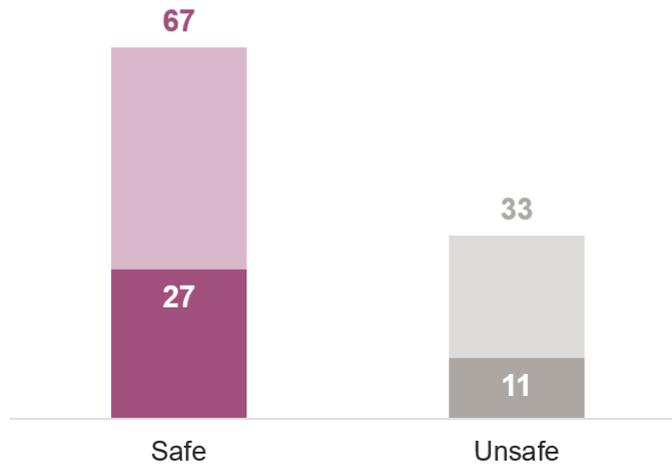
(Split) Based on current trends, if you were given a choice, which would you rather be doing (when school starts this year)?



- **Members generally feel safe returning to school in-person this year, but do not feel “very safe.”** Two thirds (67 percent) of members say they feel safe working in-person this year, but few feel very safe (27 percent).

How safe do you feel returning to in-person school this year?

Darker shade = Stronger intensity



- **Amid Delta surge, members place greater importance on requiring PPE and enforcing physical distancing for in-person instruction compared to three months ago.** Members continue to favor a wide range of proposals to make school buildings safer, including requiring staff and students to isolate if they test positive, having sanitizer available, and cleaning surfaces regularly. Members also place high importance

on requiring unvaccinated staff and unvaccinated students to be tested regularly, though very few say such measures are implemented in their schools.

Safety Measures

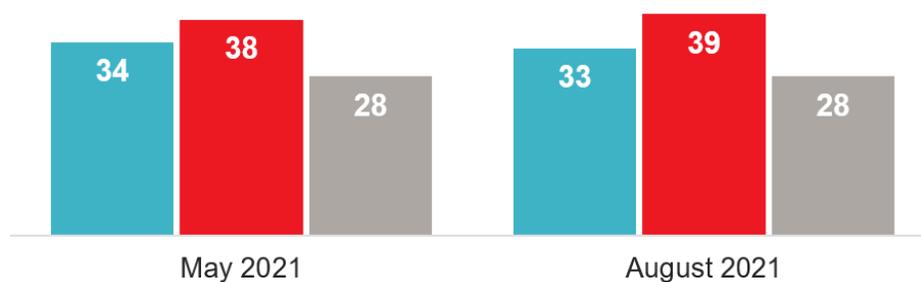
**Among not doing full distance learning*

	% Important		% Implemented*
Requiring students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 to isolate according to federal health guidelines	96	✓	73
Improved ventilation in schools	96	✗	36
Hand sanitizer available throughout the schools	93	✓	89
Cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces	92	✓	72
PPE available to school employees and students	88	✓	71
PPE provided and required for school employees and students / Requiring students and staff to wear masks in schools	81	✓	65
Enforcing physical distancing measures	77	✗	34
Requiring unvaccinated staff be regularly tested for COVID-19	74	✗	12
Requiring unvaccinated students be regularly tested for COVID-19	70	✗	6

- Improved ventilation in school buildings continues to be a key area to address.** Members say improved ventilation in school buildings is a top priority, though few report that it has been implemented in their schools. When directly asked whether they think their school's ventilation system is providing them enough protection from COVID-19 to feel safe working in-person, 33 percent say yes, 39 percent say no, and 28 percent aren't sure.

In your opinion, is your school's ventilation system providing you enough protection from COVID-19 for you to feel safe working in-person?

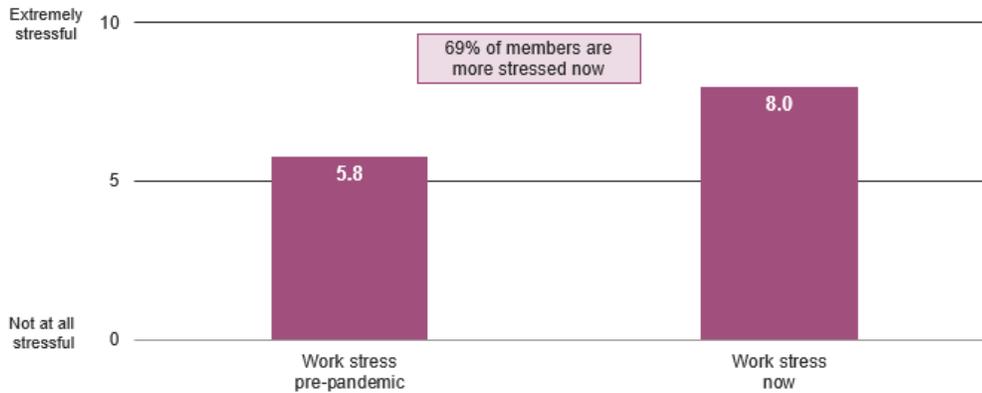
● Yes ● No ● Not sure



- Educators are much more stressed than they were before the pandemic.** When we ask members to rate how stressful they found work before the pandemic, members mean rating is 5.8 on a 0 to 10 scale. When asked to rate their stress level now, the mean climbs to 8.0, and 69 percent of members are more stressed now than they were before the pandemic.

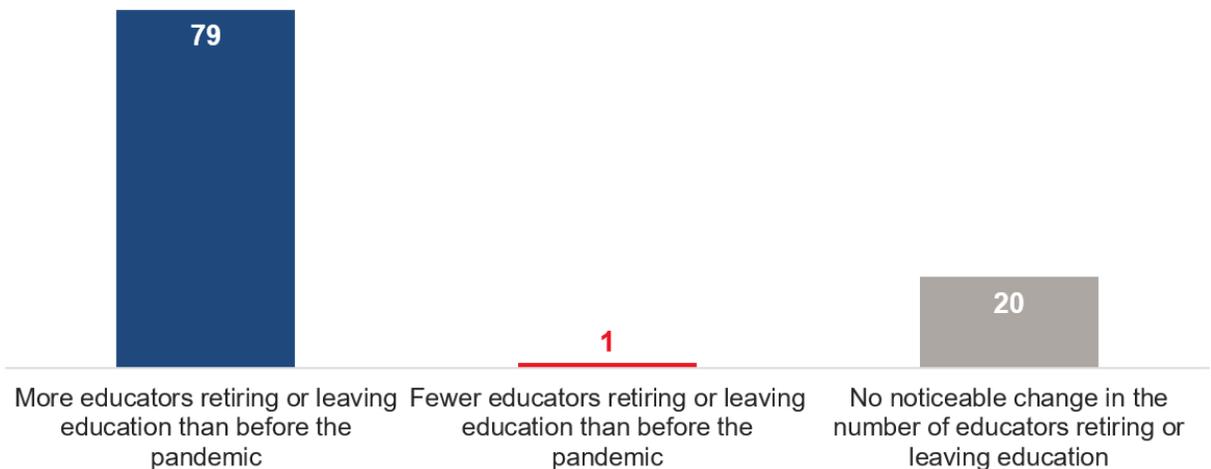
Work Stress

Pre-pandemic: On a scale of 0 to 10, how stressful did you find work before the COVID-19 pandemic?
 Pandemic: On a scale of 0 to 10, how stressful do you find work now? If your district is not currently in session, think about when you were last working at your school(s).



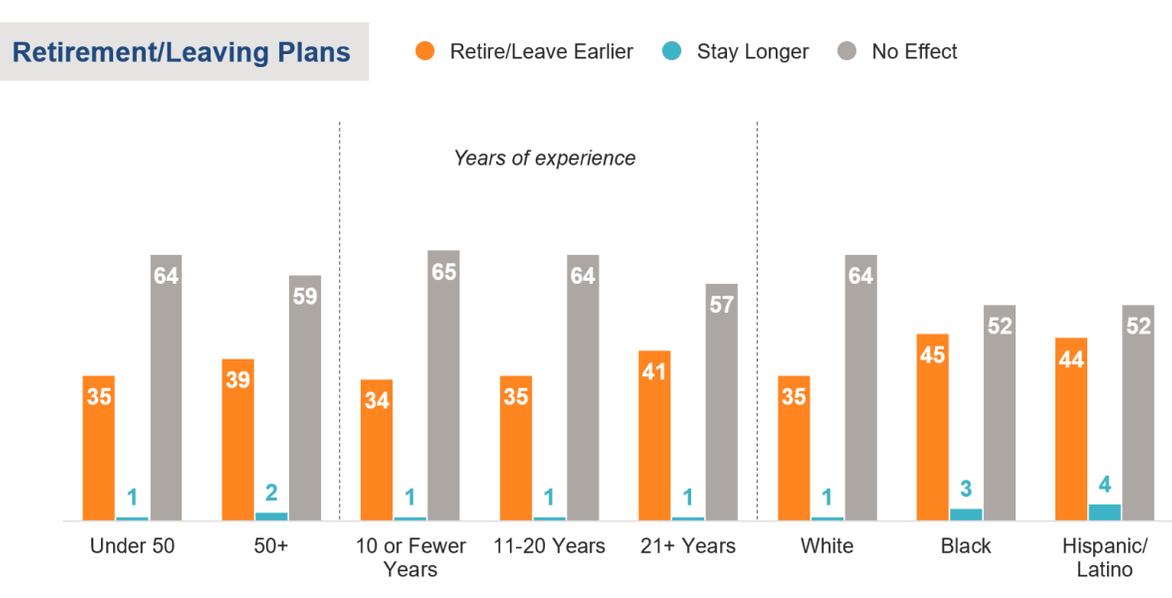
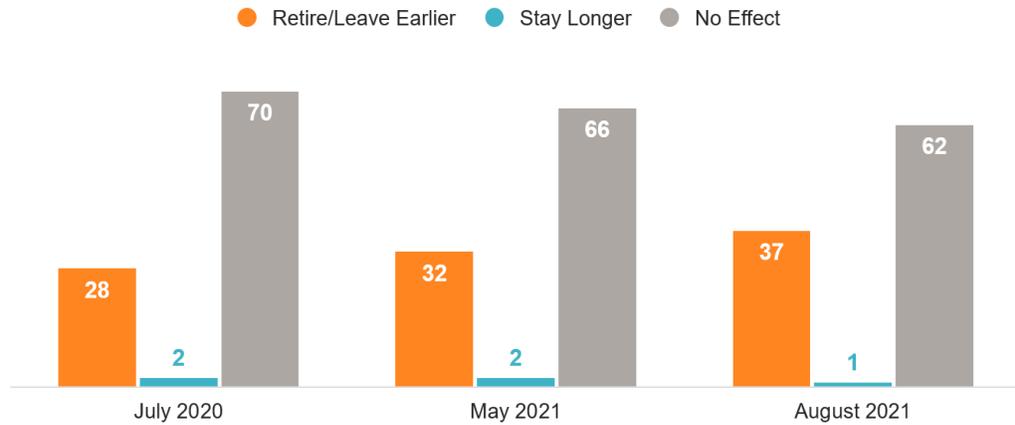
- The vast majority of members feel the pandemic has resulted in more educators leaving the profession than before the pandemic and a growing number of members say they personally are more likely to retire or leave the profession earlier than they had planned.** Nearly 80 percent of members say they feel that since the pandemic started, they have seen more educators retiring or leaving the profession than before the pandemic. When we ask members if the pandemic has made them more likely to retire or leave education earlier than planned, 37 percent of members say it has, an increase from 32 percent in May and up from 28 percent in July 2020. Educators of color are more likely to say they will leave earlier than planned, which is particularly troubling given the imperative to increase the presence of educators of color in the U.S.

Since the pandemic started, do you think you have seen...?



Retirement/Leaving Plans

Has the COVID-19 pandemic made you more likely to retire or leave education earlier than you'd planned, more likely to work in education longer than you'd planned, or made no difference in your plans?



Methodology

On behalf of the National Education Association, GBAO conducted the nationally representative online survey of 2,807 non-retired NEA members August 14-23, 2021. The sample is subject to a +/- 1.9 percentage point margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level.